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# The Problem of History and Historiography

By

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Clash of Three Empires

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TO  
MY BELOVED WIFE



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## INTRODUCTION

In spite of the moral earnestness and urgency with which the vast masses of people wish to acquire historical knowledge there is at present a great difference of opinion and a certain amount of confusion, even among students of history regarding the purpose, extent, and fruitfulness of historical inquiry and reflection. It must be said in fairness to them that the historians have seriously attempted to inquire into the problems which confront them in their endeavour to comprehend history. These problems are many and by their very nature are of a wide generality which raise questions fundamental to all historical investigation. In some ways these questions are so vital that without a rational theory sufficient to meet them no historian can approach his task with any hope of success. Some of these questions may be briefly pointed out here at the outset so as to give the reader an idea of what historical comprehension implies. For example : Is certainty attainable in History ? Can the scientific method of the physical and mathematical sciences be applied to historical inquiry ? Is it possible to formulate general scientific laws of wide universal application to the so-called 'phenomenon of history' ? What are, if any, dynamic forces in the history of mankind ? What

is the historical rôle of institutions, ideas, and individuals? Is there any purpose besides that of acquiring accurate information in the pursuit of historical inquiry? What place does chance occupy in our conception of historical occurrences? and so on.

Unless a historian has convictions, even if he has no well-reasoned views on some of these vital questions, his history would be a meaningless assemblage of anecdotes contributing nothing to understanding. It will be found that the dynamic uncertainty of human volition and of historical situations makes it impossible to find rule-of-thumb answers to these questions. 'History' illustrates and fulfils the vital questions thus raised. However, without these and many other questions, and problems acting as an indicator historical investigation proves abortive, and mountains of encyclopaedic labour leads to uncertain results of doubtful value. The task indeed is very difficult, and in spite of patience and diligence many historians fail to accomplish even a modicum of success. How difficult the task of a chronicler-historian is, was pointed out well by Francis Bacon. He said : "It is a work of great labour and judgment to throw the mind back upon the things past and to store it with antiquity, diligently to search into, and with fidelity and freedom relate, (i) the commotion of times, (ii) the character of persons, (iii) the instability of counsels, (iv) the course of actions, (v) the bottoms of pretences, (vi) the secrets of state, (vii) to set all this to view, in proper and suitable

language, especially as ancient transactions are uncertain, and late ones exposed to danger; whence such civil history is attended with numerous defects, the greater part of historians writing little more than empty narrations and such as are really a disgrace to history; while some hastily draw up particular relations and trivial memoirs; some only run over general heads of actions and others descend to the minutest particular which has no relation....to action<sup>1</sup>."

However, apart from these—what Bacon chose to refer to as vulgar narrations—philosophical difficulties and uncertainties exist even regarding the fruits of patient, diligent, impartial, and exhaustive historical chronicles produced by acute historical investigators. There is a powerful presumption towards a belief that historical knowledge cannot be acquired at all. What is generally understood as history, it is said, is mere opinion or fiction, and only at its best it is based on probability.

It may be asked, why do individuals and communities desire historical knowledge at all? There are several reasons for this apparently insatiable thirst for knowledge regarding the past. It seems that the past has an invariable fascination for the human mind, almost bordering on a sentimental attraction. The mind has certain pre-conceptions about past events which it cherishes so much that it wants to enrich and authenticate them, because the more accurate our ideas about the past are the more

<sup>1</sup> Francis Bacon: *Advancement of Learning*, p. 86.

fascinating they become. In individual personal life, man wistfully and tenderly dwells on the earlier stages as they slip by. Hardships and sorrows once lived through lose their poignancy. Similarly, nations and peoples remember with increasing regret the glory of their past achievements, forgetting their suffering and sacrifices. A later generation feels the exaltation but not the sufferings of an achievement. Glory increases with time while sorrows become dimmer. That is probably why every people place their golden age in the past. Further, history may have grown consciously "out of a desire to rescue from forgetfulness man's personal and collective past".<sup>1</sup> Another reason for this thirst for history is the hope of man to see if the past can inform him so as to prepare him to face the future with some confidence. He believes with a considerable amount of truth that the present situation in which he finds himself is the result of a series of causally connected antecedent events, and if a solution is to be found it can only be found by discovering "how things come to be as they are." Physical science has taught man that it is possible to command nature by leaving it to fulfil its own physical nature, and then by arranging and organising physical force in such a way as to obtain a desired result. Society wants to know from historians how it comes into a given historical situation, and by what stages and transformations, physical as well as ideal, do historical events occur? We are what we are,

<sup>1</sup> Salman: Why is History Re-written? p. 6.

because of 'what we have been, and history is to mankind what memory is for an individual human being. An individual conserves his experience not only consciously but also unconsciously. When it is conscious he directs his organised effort in facing a situation in the light of his earlier experience. However, sometimes the impression of earlier experiences is carried unconsciously into an almost instinctive response to a situation. Society seems to have these manifestations in the form of a "social or racial memory." Earlier epochs leave an indelible mark on it, and while its leaders may consciously aim at policies not in conformity with the historical background of a people the people themselves unconsciously respond to their new situations under the impress of their 'history'.

One of the first difficulties that a student of history encounters on his initial contact with the subject is the confusion caused by the ambiguity of the term 'history.' As it is generally understood "history" means, both a narration of events and also the events that are narrated. Does history then mean the composed literary narrative or does it refer exclusively to the events that form the evidence, the so-called 'facts' of history, the raw materials of the story which cast in a space-time pattern are alone said to have taken place? If history is a narration it becomes an art, whose value lies in appealing to our emotions and in satisfying our aesthetic faculties. Truth is subordinated to beauty of form and a richness of content, with an appeal, however subtle, to our appropriate

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emotions. But if, on the other hand, history is (narrated orunnarrated) events, it becomes a problem in "knowing." The first is 'historiography', while the latter is 'historical epistemology'.

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORIOGRAPHY

The confusion between history and historiography was obviously due to the obscure and literary beginning of historical writing, and what was historiography was considered to be history. Historical writing in the form of historiography continues to flourish as ever, and most of it is produced in order to satisfy the vanity of peoples and of nations. Before the middle of the 19th century, however, historical writing was unblushingly a literary art. Not only was it considered to be a branch of literature, but historians even attempted to cultivate a good literary style, in order "to tell a good story well,"—or better as the archivist may retort.

Historical writing has been unable to overcome an implied connection with the literary art largely because of the accident of its origin. Ballads, epics, and sagas were the earliest forms of historical composition. Further, as historical writing developed the historians saw the technical similarity from the point of view of composition, between historical writing on the one hand, and writing of epics, tragedies, and novels on the other.

The actual origin, in point of time, of historical

reflection is naturally obscure, and is probably as old as man himself, who can very appropriately be described as a 'history-conscious' animal. Historical composition, as we know it, has its origin in the fabulatory stage when the savage dreamt of his ancestors in the exploits—real or exaggerated—of legendary heroes, and in the boastful stories of rude and successful primitives. But by far the most important cause of the rise of historical interest was religious. Primitive man became conscious and curious regarding the origin of superstitious practices of his community, and regarding its religious observances whose purpose was to win the grace of mysterious powers in maintaining the continued life, and prosperity of the community. That is why almost every observance, practice, rite, and belief of the savage is traced to some mythical person or to some remote occurrence. In this way grew, multiplied, and were sanctified myths and legends, folk-lore and stories which are the earliest evidence of history-consciousness in man. In 'historical' times yet another motive has often played its part. The preservation of the record of family greatness at the courts of petty chieftains was in the hands of court-bards, and their compositions undoubtedly were some of the earliest attempts to preserve historical tradition. As society gradually became more stabilised and 'civilised', and as social and political institutions became traditional and time-honoured, it was found necessary to ransack and produce records which gave the sanction of authority and tradition to these

established institutions. History thence became the handmaid of authority who often called history to its aid, in order to stamp its actions and activity, its claims and privileges with the sanctity of antiquity. The weight of tradition in the eyes of man is great, because man will "believe his ears but not his eyes." Fabulatory history has a far greater appeal than a reasoned, dispassionate account.

A historiographer is one who aims at making a presentation of historical facts in a literary form. When composing this literary piece he finds that he can utilise successfully and profitably the literary devices of form, imagery, and even the wealth of detail as is done by a literary artist. He may find that the subject he proposes to deal with shares some of the characteristics that are to be generally found in a subject suitable for the writing of an epic. Thus the subject of a historian may have epic proportions. History like an epic has its heroes and its villains. The history of Herodotus is nearest to an epic, and in it the Athenian people are the heroes of the piece. Both these stories-epic and history, which were at one time almost synonymous, even after they were recognised as separate arts, were both of them patronised by kings and their courts, and by cities and states for their entertainment, and for the satisfaction of their vanity. Sometimes a historical subject may be found to have close similarity to drama, and the literary technique devised by them both is often very similar. Both concentrate on certain specific individual characters as the important

figures in certain situations, and try to deduce from the character of these persons, and from their motives the reasons for the events which take place around, and through these characters. In drama the fate of the individual is the result of certain traits of his character. This is particularly evident in the case of Greek, and some of the Shakespearean dramas. Historiography also in so far as it concerns itself with great men attempts to explain their historical actions by bringing out the part which the character and motives of its great men played in these actions. This explanation of historical events was quite adequate so long as events were determined entirely by the will of one or more individuals such as sovereigns. Motive is the impelling factor behind individual actions, and in order to find an adequate explanation of historical events, historiography naturally seeks the motives of those individuals who took prominent part in them.

But the affinity between historiography and a novel is closer than that between historiography and any other literary production. The historian as well as a novelist narrates events, describes situations, exhibits motives, and analyses character. The art of writing a novel comes closest to that of writing a historiography. No doubt the picture of a novelist is imaginary, but it is not altogether divorced from life. The picture which a historiography depicts is imaginative. Both the imaginary picture of the novelist and the imaginative picture of a historiographer need the same creative faculty for their successful

execution. They are essentially the product of an *a priori* imagination which thinks out in advance the whole picture in bold outline, and later fills in the details to suit, explain, illustrate, and enhance the value and inevitability of the whole piece. Both the historiographer as well as the novelist aim at making their picture a coherent whole where every character is so bound up with the rest that every action of each one of the characters must be in conformity with the general plan, and we cannot imagine any of them acting otherwise than as they act in the story. The total picture as presented is artistically a perfect whole, out of which intrusive elements that are out of harmony with the whole piece are omitted, and the cause or causes of the main event have an air of completeness and finality, being deemed totally adequate to produce the effect. No part or aspect of the event remains unexplained. Historiography has therefore the simplicity, unity, vigour, and directness of great art. The similarity between a novel and a historiographic piece might have merged into identity but for the fact two additional conditions essential to historiography which it does not share with a novel. A historiographic piece has to satisfy these two conditions in order to be true to itself, and in order to satisfy the need for which it is written. They are: (a) A historiographic product is constrained by the fact of being definitely localised in space, and stretched out in a span of time—time measured not necessarily in length of years, and decades but time comprehended in the actuality of change, result of

the logic of external conditions, and the compulsion of internal necessity. (b) Further, historiography has to justify the truth of its conclusions, assumptions, inferences, and statements, by an appeal to evidence, extraneous to itself. In a novel, the evidence is internal, and none exists outside and by itself as a permanent menace to the whole causal structure as it does in the case of a historiography. Historiography has to seek evidence, and to produce it in order to justify the truth of its entire structure and detail.

There are now few historians who maintain that historiography exhausts the entire function, concept, and purpose of historical inquiry, but the most distinguished among the advocates of history being a historiographic art is G. M. Trevelyan. He thinks that the impelling motive in historical study is poetic. The poetry of history consists in the belief of its truth; because a 'history' which is not true at once loses its value and ceases to be poetic. It does not appeal any more to our imagination nor to our emotions, as soon as we realise that what we thought was true was no longer so. Mythology is poetic but mythological 'history' is even more so. This imaginative appeal grows even stronger when we realise in our study of the past that "far more has been doomed to irrevocable oblivion." For Trevelyan therefore history is the art of narration, and as such is a branch of literature. Trevelyan lays a great stress on the fact that real life, which it is the business of history to portray, is full of emotional and non-intellectual

as well as intellectual value, and therefore this can be done only through the medium of art. "Ought it to be.....the accumulation and interpretation of facts, and opinions in their full emotional and intellectual value to a wider public by the difficult art of literature?"

## II

In historiography as in all literature, the chief pre-occupation of every aspiring historiographer was the choice of an appropriate theme—an artistic unity in presentation of the whole theme. This is easiest in biographies where the whole problem centres round the life and achievement of a single individual; it is comparatively easy where national history is concerned as it is round the interests, activities, and well-being of a collective individual that the whole story revolves. Every historiographer, of course, solves his problem of theme and artistic unity in his own way as every work of art by its very nature is individual, unique, and therefore within certain limits, a law unto itself. The method of achieving artistic unity is solved in such a way as to suit the peculiar genius of the historiographer and the nature of his "plastic material," i.e., the historical material which he uses as the main body of his story, and the central theme that the historian proposes to portray on a given space-time canvas. Nothing is more interesting to study in this respect than to compare the different masters in history,—to borrow an expression from art,—and to note the various points of similarity and

difference in the technique which each of them employs. There is a certain amount of similarity between Herodotus and Thucydides in their method of approach to their task, though they differ so much in their conception of 'history', and in the execution of their work. The similarity between them consisted in the manner in which both of them solved the problem regarding the unity of their narratives, viz., by concentrating on single indivisible events that were uppermost in the minds of their contemporaries. It was an event, and not any individual person, family or state, nor the embodiment of an idea or an institution which they aimed at analysing. The great event which stirred the imagination of the Greek world, and made itself conscious, an essential condition for the birth of historiography, was the Persian War. Herodotus proposed to tell the Greeks how the struggle between the Greeks and the Persians came about culminating in a great triumph of the former. The rambling and quite chatty narrative of Herodotus gathers round the great event to which it gradually, though not with much inevitability or with any inexorable logic, leads. Thucydides also dealt with what he considered to be a judgment abundantly confirmed by the event itself, and also by posterity—the most radical and epoch-making event of his time. Thucydides was so convinced of the mightiness of the Peloponnesian War that he took some pains at the outset to show that it was by far the greatest war that the Greeks had been engaged in whether in mythological or

in historical times. Both these historiographers solved the problem of unity by concentrating their narratives on the external unity imposed by an event. This external unity becomes all the more obvious, because these historians gave as causes of these events such explanations as were in accordance with the theory they held regarding the connection between the historical antecedent and consequent.

- ✓ Both these historians appear to have agreed that great events could ultimately be traced to their source.
- ✓ The starting points in time and space were single, and often trivial causes or beginnings and occurrences. Like the sources of rivers great events have small, and almost trivial beginnings. Herodotus sought to believe that the Greek-Persian dispute originated in a single crime perpetrated in the obscure twilight of historical time, while Thucydides persuades us to assume that the Spartan War was due to a petty dispute between Corcyra and Corinth. He was not so naive as to believe it to be an adequate cause but he strongly suggests that it began when it did owing to certain personal considerations which strongly weighed with Pericles. He took advantage of the state of feeling in Athens on questions which had originally started since the dispute between Corcyra and Corinth came to a head.

However, historiographers have not always been content with a desire to analyse, and to relate single events, however important the events may be. When the 'historians' propose to write an account of events spread over several centuries covering

the life-histories of a number of peoples, through several generations at different stages of civilisations or decay, (as the case may be) and transcending the lives of great many personages, howsoever great in their own way, and in their own time, it is not possible to unite all the events so strewn in the same way as could be done by historians who had only a single event relatively circumscribed in space and time, to think of. The historiographers under such conditions having been deprived of the individuality and uniqueness peculiar to a great single complete event, built up their structure on the framework suggested by a particular central perspective. All events are looked at from a particular point of view as soon as the historian has made up his mind about the manner in which he intends to organise his material so as to bring into relief this over-riding and all-embracing central theme. The central theme subordinates everything, and whatever it does not illuminate is discarded as being irrelevant. Polybius achieves the unity of his narrative in this way, not by concentrating on the indivisible event as his predecessors, Herodotus and Thucydides had done before him but by supplying the unity of a central perspective by whose synthesising and discriminating embrace he sought to integrate, and then interpret the bewildering multiplicity of events before him. His point of view was the growth of the Roman dominion. He undertakes to relate his account by the preliminary observation that "previously the doings of the world had so to say been

dispersed, as 'they were held together by no unity of initiation, results or locality,' (Polybius, Book I, p. 3) until the rise of Rome as a world power. This method of interpreting history of nations, civilisations, peoples, and states, and even institutions owes its inspiration to Polybius, and is more or less natural to adopt when confronted with a vast mass of facts about historical actions. It is very much in vogue. It certainly has made a vast body of ancient, and modern chronicle intelligible. The kind of unity achieved by these histories is, however, an almost architectural unity of design, an individuality altogether external, which could be achieved by collecting, arranging, and interpreting a number of disconnected multicontactual facts into coherent mechanical wholes, as in a jig-saw puzzle. Under such conditions one kaleidoscopic whole could be logically as true as another leading to perhaps a better comprehension of events but hardly to a better understanding of them. Undoubtedly the symmetry, arrangement, and logical order produced by these panoramic displays gives them a stamp of beauty, a spiritual rigour, and well-proportioned completeness, peculiar to itself. This was particularly easy, as history and historical writing was by general assumption confined to an account of battles and warfare, and as such had an external extra-individual stern logic of its own.

However, other types of unity of presentation are not impossible. The unity of interest and narrative could be created by emphasising an inner moral unity that binds a people or a nation. The ex-

istence of a supra-individual moral organic being is at least a modern discovery if not a historical category evolved by events. National characteristics are the best expression of this moral unity and individuality. Livy was the first among ancient historians to point out the historic importance of the moral entity of a people. He emphasises his point of view almost with a declamatory directness thus : "Here are questions to which I will have every reader give his close attention—what life and morals were; through what men, and by what policies in peace and war, empire was established and enlarged, then let him note how with the gradual relaxation of discipline, morals first gave way, as it were, then sank lower and lower, and then finally began that downward plunge which has brought us to the present time when we can endure neither our vices nor their cure."<sup>1</sup>

In modern times this form of unity is attractive to historiographers who dwell on the inner moral unity that grips together the story of a people through their triumphs and humiliations. It is attractive because of the self-consciousness that has been aroused or has been diffused among national types in Europe. In some ways, the national and racial idea is merely an extension of the idea underlying the factual moral unity in a family. Apart from being a biological and economic unit the family is a moral unit, and a nation is merely a wider and more comprehensive extension of the same idea.

<sup>1</sup> Livy: Book I, p. 1.

The moral unity of a people is a category of undoubted historical actuality. Self-consciousness among the people accounts for their faith in national characteristics, and on it flourish all the pseudo-scientific theories of race-mysticism, of popular gods and legends, and of civilisation and decadence. The moral unity is a unity of belief and a way of life.

Some historiographers take the conception of the 'organic being of a people' to its logical conclusion. They suggest an analogy between the life of an individual which goes through the various biological or organic stages of growth, maturity, and decay on the one hand, and a race, a people or civilisation on the other, which is supposed to go through similar phases of national upsurge and eventual decadence. Many historians therefore talked about the 'childhood of a race.' The English are supposed to have been in early manhood in the Elizabethan times, and reached late middle age in the Victorian era. These analogies, of course, indicate that every race will run through a certain history-span but will eventually and inevitably decay just as an individual must ultimately die. It also assumes that, like the individual, the race is a free moral agent.

Such analogies are undoubtedly helpful and suggestive towards a better understanding of historical phenomenon, but they are not exact, and have to be treated with great caution. As a historiographic device they may be useful, but they are to be treated with the reserve proper to allegories, if historiography is not to degenerate into historical

fiction. This analogy is by no means a new one. It was well known to Ibn Khaldun, Bacon, and Fontenelle. This analogy is superficial, because in a society the members of the body politic are similar to one another in all relevant respects except in the functions that they perform. In an individual on the other hand, the members differ in their function as well as in their morphological structure. The organic laws applicable to one are therefore not necessarily applicable to another in their internal organisation and economy, in equal measure. The laws may even be widely different. It is customary to think that modern France is no longer a young vigorous nation, but is now tired and old. The proof advanced in favour of this theory is a very interesting one. It illustrates very well the assumptions that underlie this rather popular and superficial historical speculation. A nation is supposed to be old if it has a long "glorious" history behind it, but which no longer occupies its once pre-eminent position among its neighbours. Pre-eminence in the military sphere is held to be particularly valuable to be classed as a youthful and vigorous nation, because war needs physical and moral energy even more than it needs the mere material sinews of war howsoever important the latter may be. Therefore, the protagonists of this theory argue that a nation which is war-like, expansive, and is foremost in commercial, industrial, and intellectual activity in time of peace, is to be considered a young nation. It will be found that nations which are war-like and expansive, and

in the forefront of commercial and industrial advancement are also nations with an expanding population with a high birth-rate, and a comparatively high proportion of young people. Since most nations, which according to this definition were young once in this sense, have sooner or later lost this position to rivals, national historiographers have found this analogy a very helpful one.

## CHAPTER II

### PRACTICE OF ANCIENT HISTORIANS

The content of historical knowledge, and the method of presenting it finds historians divided in their practice. They have interpreted the nature and range of their investigation with a latitude which suggests that they considered themselves almost on virgin soil.

For Herodotus 'history' was a record of memorable events to which was prefaced all the information that he could gather in an endeavour to explain the chain of events which formed his main subject. He arranged this information in an introductory fashion to form a kind of geneological series. "What Herodotus of Halicarnassus learnt by inquiry is here set forth in order that ~~so~~ the memory of the past may not be blotted out from among men by time, and that the great and marvellous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners, and especially the reason why they warred against each other may not lack renown".<sup>1</sup> The account that Herodotus left in his 'history' is very absorbing, and though his notions regarding the value, relevance, and the arrangement of his information is crude he was in fact though not because of

<sup>1</sup> The History of Herodotus : Book I, p. 2.

the soundness of his theory, "the first writer to imply that the task of the 'historian' was to reconstruct the whole past life of man."<sup>1</sup> In one respect, however, Herodotus differs from all other historians that lived after him. It perhaps makes his claim to be considered a 'historian' at all, a little doubtful. This is owing to the fact that he was only the precursor of what was later to be historical writing. He was in the twilight of the dawn of a promise that was later to be Clio. Herodotus did not consider it necessary to judge the value and veracity of his information, but thought that a 'historian's' duty was merely to collect everything that could even remotely have a bearing on his subject. He said : "My duty is to report all that is said, but I am not obliged to believe it all alike—a remark which may be understood to apply to my whole history" (Book VII, Chap. 152).

Thucydides, on the other hand, was a very much more exact man. He considered that the accuracy of statements made was far more important and valuable from the 'historian's' point of view than the entertainment offered by the historical narrative. He had the eye of a hawk for the relevance of his information. He picked out the essential points in the information available about a series of events, with a skill which baffles the judge regarding the possible value of what Thucydides chose to reject. The work of Thucydides has the obvious stamp of a logical

<sup>1</sup> G.H. E. Barnes : History of Historical Writing, p. 29.

method in thought and arrangement, though he was apt to concentrate more on the political, diplomatic, and personal causes, occurrences and tendencies in 'history' rather than on the economic and social aspects of it. The chronology of Thucydides appears, on the face of it, to be extraordinarily artificial though possibly he could not help it. It was the influence of his example which for a long time narrowed down the scope of 'historical' interest to political and military affairs. The chief merit of Thucydides lay in the 'critical' attitude which he adopted towards his evidence. He must have had Herodotus in mind when he said : "Men do not discriminate, and are too ready to receive ancient traditions about their own as well as about other countries....; he (historian) must not be misled by the exaggerated fancies of poets or by chroniclers who seek to please the ear rather than to speak the truth. Their accounts cannot be tested by them, and most of the facts in the lapse of ages have passed into the region of romance. At such a distance of time he must make up his mind to be satisfied with conclusions resting upon the clearest evidence which can be had". Another important aspect of history which appealed to Thucydides with considerable force was the instructive value of history. He said : "But if he who desires to have before his eyes a true picture of the events which may be expected to happen hereafter in the order of the human things shall pronounce what I have written to be useful, then I shall be satisfied; my history

has been an everlasting possession, and not a prize composition which is heard and forgotten".<sup>1</sup> Lord Acton also shared this view, and emphasised the instructive value of history in another sense. He looked upon it as a store-house of examples to be emulated by the youth. He said : "Minds that are greatest and best alone furnish instructive examples".<sup>2</sup> Instruction, whether moral or political, was for a long time considered to be the main function of 'history', and most people agreed with Machiavelli in emphasising its value as a school of political affairs.

Polybius, the greatest of ancient historians, subscribes to the same view. "Neither the writer nor the reader of history therefore should confine his attention to a bare statement of facts; he must take into account all that preceded, accompanied or followed them. For if you take from history all explanation of cause, principle, and motive, and of adaptation of means to an end, what is left is a mere panorama, without being instructive; and although it may please for the moment, it has no abiding value."<sup>3</sup> Polybius had all the solicitude of Thucydides for accuracy of statements made but had a broader vision of the scope of history. He emphasised the environmental and civilisational aspect of 'history' giving them their due weight in the formative factors of history.

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides : Chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup> Acton : Study of History, p. 9. (essay).

<sup>3</sup> Polybius : Book III, Chap. 35.

Polybius appears so 'modern' in his views on history that Shotwell says of him : "But his (Polybius') digressions are much more than apologies; for after all Polybius had thought deeply on his own task. They rise to the dignity of a treatise on history. The first and the noblest statement of scientific ideals for the historian until the days of Ranke"<sup>1</sup>. Polybius thought that "the science of history was three-fold; first the dealing with written documents and the arrangement of the material thus obtained; second, topography, the appearance of cities and localities, the description of rivers and harbours, and speaking generally, the peculiar features of the seas and their countries, and their relative differences; thirdly, political affairs .....; the special point of history is first to ascertain what the actual words were; secondly, to learn why it was that a particular policy or arrangement failed or succeeded. For a bare statement of occurrence is interesting indeed, but not instructive; but when this is supplemented by a statement of cause, the study of history becomes fruitful"<sup>2</sup>. However, in spite of the examples of Herodotus and Polybius, under the influence of Thucydides, 'history' continued to be understood in a narrower and restricted sense. Gibbon, considering his reputation, held singularly narrow views on the subject. He said : "War and administration of public affairs should be the major theme of history".

<sup>1</sup> Shotwell: History of History, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> Polybius: Book XII.

It is profitable to consider in some detail the view which Polybius held regarding the scope and nature of 'history', because it most nearly approximates to 'history', as it is understood by a large number of historians in modern times. According to Polybius the task of the historian consisted of the following : (1) An organic and synoptical view of events as against the analytical and particularist practice of his contemporaries and predecessors. He said: "For what gives my work its peculiar quality and what is most remarkable in the present is this. Fortune having guided almost all the affairs of the world in one direction, and having forced them to incline towards one and the same end, a historian should bring before his readers under one synoptical view the operations by which she has accomplished her general purpose. Indeed it was this chiefly that encouraged and invited me to undertake this task....As it is I observe that while several modern writers deal with particular wars, and certain matters connected with them, no one as far as I am aware has even attempted to inquire critically, when and whence the general and comprehensive scheme of events originated, and how it led up to the end.....He, indeed, who believes that by studying particular histories he can acquire a fairly just view of histories as a whole, .....is much in the case of one, who after having looked at the dissevered limbs of an animal once alive and beautiful, fancies he has been as good as an eye-witness of the creature itself, in all its actions and grace.... ; Special histories therefore con-

tributed very little to the knowledge of the whole and conviction of its truth."<sup>1</sup> In this statement Polybius brings out very well the chief defect of trying to obtain complete knowledge by an analytical study. A very thorough examination of every brick, wood, and stone in a building does not give the student an understanding of the building for which they are used.

Polybius points out here the chief defect of analytical study very well. In analysis the process of understanding is confined to studying in detail the composition and structure of a given subject before it. It dissects it and atomises it. In doing so it restricts its view and operation to what is before it, with only a secondary eye by way of a background to the general scheme of things, to which the subject in its proper setting belongs. The subject is thus carved out by selecting, by detaching it from its environment by atomising it, and by immobilising it. In the case, of historical phenomenon, this process needs watching all the more on account of the peculiarly dynamic, mobile, and inter-connected nature of historical events.

(ii) *Instruction.* Polybius has almost a preceptive view of history. In this he followed the general tendency of all ancient philosophical view. They all looked upon historical inquiry and narration, as a preliminary to instruction in active political life, and treated it as a source of inspiration and guidance to younger generations who were

<sup>1</sup> Polybius : Book I, p. 4.

constantly exhorted to emulate, and to follow the example of great historical men. "There is no more ready corrective of conduct than knowledge of the past."<sup>1</sup> "We should regard as the best discipline for actual life the experience that accrues from history." As a corollary to this preceptive purpose, Polybius expects a historian to pass moral judgment on historical events, and to judge the public and private conduct of historical personalities, with a view to passing judgment and apportioning blame or praise to them. "So far he (Polyarchus) makes everything clear to us, but he deprives us of what is the special virtue of history, of and what should follow, I mean the praise and honourable mention of conduct noteworthy for its excellence"<sup>2</sup>. (iii) *Truthful account of events and motives*: This is, of course, absolutely essential, if a historical inquiry is to be honest with itself, and is not to be an attempt deliberately to hide the inaccuracy of information by dressing it as genuine 'history'. However, Polybius was right to insist upon it as something which a historian must never forget, because the history of historical writing shows countless examples of the way in which history has acted as the handmaid of 'mis-information'. Historical writing is full of histories written by exhorters, and by apologists, by loyal friends, and by supporters of parties, ideals, causes, and interests, by jingoists, by fanatics, heretics, and ignoramuses, all of whom by deliberate falsehood on occasion but more

<sup>1</sup> Polybius : Book I, p. 14. <sup>2</sup> Polybius : Book II, p. 61.

often by suppression of truth, brought history to the despair of its true function. Polybius said this of Polyarchus : "In his eagerness to arouse the pity and attention of his readers, he treats us to a picture of clinging women, with their hair dishevelled, and their breasts bare..... A historical author should not try to thrill his readers by such exaggerated pictures nor should he like a tragic poet try to imagine the probable utterances of his characters or reckon up all the consequences probably incidental to the occurrences with which he deals, but simply record what really happened, and what was really said, however commonplace. For the object of tragedy is not the same as history, but quite the opposite. The tragic poet should thrill and charm his audience for the moment by the verisimilitude of the words he puts in his characters' mouth, but it is the task of the historian to instruct and convince for all time serious students by the truth of the facts..... So in every case the final criterian of good and evil lies not in what is done, but in the different reasons and purposes of the doer".<sup>1</sup>

The belief in the pontifical status of historiographers, and their claim to instruct was not peculiar to ancient historians. Instruction, whether moral or political, was considered throughout the Middle Ages, and also in the days of the Renaissance as the main function of history, and most people agreed with Machia-

<sup>1</sup> Polybius : Book II, p. 56.

velli in emphasising its value as a school of political affairs. Even in modern times historians can be found "recognising Clio as" the moral instructress. Lord Acton was of the same opinion. But by far the most illustrious English historian to stand by this time-honoured function of history is Mr. G. M. Trevelyan. "The truth about the past, if taught and read with broad human sympathy can give a noble education to the mind of the student not only in politics but in all kinds of civic and social relationships, and even in the domain of personal, religious, and ethical ideals". And again when answering the question what is history he says : "It is the tale of the thing done, even more than its causes and effects which trains political judgment by widening the range of political sympathy, and deepening the approval and disapproval of conscience that stimulates by example youth to aspire and age to endure, by the light of what men once have been, to see the things we are and dimly to descry the form of what we should be."<sup>1</sup> That history written with this object in view undoubtedly succeeds is evident from examples of some of the men of action of eminence. Napoleon is reputed to have enriched his mind by the study of the 'Lives' of noble Greeks and Romans. Caesar in his commentaries testifies to the benefit that a man of action acquires by a study of history.

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Trevelyan : Present Position of History (essay), p. 148.

There is yet another example of historiographic writing, a peculiar achievement of English historians. Much of English political history has been written from the point of view of political parties. We thus get Whig and Tory historians each justifying the actions of his own party, and at the same time condemning those of the opposition. Clarendon, Shaftesbury, Macaulay, and even Gibbon are brilliant examples. This has led to the belief that partial histories by presenting different aspects of truth ultimately bring forth the whole actual truth. As G. M. Trevelyan would have it: "Truth is perpetually being brought to light not merely by writers of cool and detached temper, but also by rival contributions of those who ardently espouse opposite sides. The past was full of passion and passion is therefore one element in historical truth."<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan has, of course, expressed a valuable idea, but in his enthusiasm has used the term 'passion' in an equivoval sense. There is no reason why a historian should take sides, and work himself into a passion, which was presumably felt by the actors in the past. He may point out the influence which the irrational elements had on those, who took active part in historic events, but he need not share it himself. J. B. Bury in answer to a specific question also answered that he was in favour of partial histories. He even considered them desirable. (*The Science of History 1903 and other Essays*, p. 17, J. B. Bury.)

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Trevelyan: *Present Position of History*, p. 180 (Essays).

### CHAPTER III

## THE ACADEMIC HISTORIAN

It was in the nineteenth century that a landmark in historical writing was reached. The nineteenth century was noted for its economic, political, and scientific advancement, and during this period philosophical speculation betrays a confidence not shared by the twentieth century, which is essentially a century of doubt and uncertainty. In the sphere of acquisition of knowledge, the method of observation and experiment was found to be so successful, particularly in the physical sciences that the scientific method acquired an unusual prestige as the most fruitful mode of inquiry. It affected all philosophical speculation, and though history does not on account of the nature of its subject matter lend itself easily to the application of the inductive method of observation and experiment, nevertheless, it was so influenced by it as to create a new school of historians who proposed to apply a 'scientific method' of investigation to history.

The nineteenth-century historian contended that up to his time there was no historical knowledge, because till then history had a false aim in the prosecution of its inquiry. What historical in-

formation there was he alleged was used for purposes other than scientific, and the acquisition of historical knowledge was secondary, if it was aimed at at all. The academic historian contended that earlier historians never sought historical knowledge, because they were either too busy entertaining their readers or sought moral instruction in the stories of the past, with the result that they produced excellent stories but no knowledge. The reason for this he said was that history was confounded with historiography, and that it was considered to be merely a branch of literature.

It was this connection with historiography, and the implication that history was an art that made the academic historian of the nineteenth century exclaim that upto 1850 A. D., history was not a science "but continued to be both for historians and the public, a branch of literature".<sup>1</sup> As J. B. Bury said the proposition "that before the beginning of the last century (19th), the study of history was not scientific may be sustained in spite of a few exceptions"<sup>2</sup>. The new advocates of a scientific method in history contended that as long as history was treated as an art though it may possess the higher truth of creative consciousness and inestimable aesthetic value, it could not give knowledge which had the advantage of scientific certainty. The academic historian, the

<sup>1</sup> Langlois and Seignobos : Introduction to the Study of History, p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Bury : Science of History and Other Essays, p. 5.

pupil of Niebuhr and Ranke, wanted thus to free themselves of the implication that history was an art, a branch of literature, and as such could not give results of scientific value.

The chief and almost the dominant characteristic of the academic historian is the weight he gives to documentary evidence. His method consists of a systematic sifting, attesting, weighing, analysing, and co-ordinating of the documents before him. He attempts to get historical knowledge by testing critically the evidence that is supplied by available documents which have satisfactorily been found valid. The document is the historian's sheet-anchor. The academic historian absolutely refuses to accept as true anything which has not been properly supported by critically examined documents.

It need not be assumed that the academic historian blindly made the mistake of considering that documents were synonymous with musty parchments though his fear of imagination leading him astray was so great that in effect he treated all documents, other than parchments found in hidden, intriguing places, with the greatest amount of suspicion. "The historian works with documents. Documents are the traces which have been left by the thoughts and actions of men of former times.....for want of documents the history of immense periods of the past of humanity is destined to remain for ever unknown."<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Langlois and Seignobos, *op. cit.*

term "traces left by the thoughts and actions of men" is a very wide term, and is open to a variety of interpretation. It could be interpreted narrowly to mean written evidence only, and in its wider implication ought to include the philosophic, social religious, economic, political, and cultural stratifications of earlier times. As a result of this wider interpretation an enormous amount of material information has become available during the last 150 years, and far more is known of early man than was ever thought possible before. Geologists, geographers, and excavators have opened, not so much new lines of inquiry, as they have widened the sphere of documentary evidence by indicating unsuspected sources of information. The importance of documents in acquiring historical knowledge cannot be overestimated. It has been well expressed by Vico : "No advance in historical knowledge is in fact ever made, except by turning from the received narrative to the document underlying it, which alone has the power of confirming, correcting, and enriching the narrative"<sup>1</sup>. In emphasising the importance of documents, which are after all the primary source of reliable information, no doubt the academic historian has done important service, because in spite of its obviousness, history had formerly neglected documents, and fabricated much of its narrative. But even then a 'historian' must admit that a critical appraisal of documents can at best give well-

<sup>1</sup>B. Croce : The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico, p. 159.

authenticated isolated facts. He can express them in categorical statements affirming or denying, and thereby certifying the occurrence of certain events. He can arrange these isolated facts and categorical affirmations about these facts in a chronological order, but beyond that he cannot go. It becomes a most wearisome repetition of things said and things written. Something has to be done with these facts, and on the strength of his contentions and protests against all historians who go beyond the available documents, the academic historian has denied to himself any means of being able to use these facts. He cannot make a judgment regarding these facts except the existential judgment which is nothing more than a categorical affirmation or a categorical denial. The academic historian is well aware of this difficulty. "A criticism of documents only yields isolated facts. In order to organise them into a body of science, it is necessary to perform a series of synthetic operations."<sup>1</sup> The academic historian is not entitled to make such an attempt.

#### HISTORY AND POSITIVE SCIENCE

Before the question of synthetic historical judgments is considered, it is important to clear up one point. The historians of the academic school have repeatedly claimed that they follow the scientific method, and that they have reduced

<sup>1</sup> Langlois and Saignobos: *Introduction to the Study of History*, p. 211.

the technique of testing and judging the documents to an accurate system. They therefore claim that knowledge as acquired by a critical study of documents is comparable to that produced by physical sciences, both in its accuracy and method. This claim of the academic historian cannot be entertained in its fulness on account of fundamental differences between history and physical sciences, arising mainly from the dissimilarities of their subject matter, and also arising from the peculiar position, which the observer of historical events occupies in relation to the events which he studies.

The subject matter of history is different from that of the physical sciences to so important an extent as to make a fundamental methodological difference, making it altogether impossible to apply the method of physical sciences to historical phenomenon. The historical method has to be different. The term 'historical method' is here used to indicate the peculiar method appropriate to a study of historical occurrences. It is quite different from another use to which this term is often put, viz., that of denoting the practice of giving the chronologically prior, antecedentary and complimentary occurrences, in the manner of a genealogical tree.

(a) History deals with events that are past. These events are like words spoken which can never be recalled to life. They are past in the sense that the time of their occurrence is chronologically anterior to the time when the historian

proposes to study them. Like the time-span, the space-focus in which the event under consideration occurred is equally elusive. No doubt the historian may visit the actual location of the event, but this location is like an empty "and slightly different" stage on which a scene was once enacted. This difficulty arising out of space-time distance, the historian may overcome by a gifted use of imagination, in filling his stage by the suitable actors of a bygone age, provided that he has isolated single narrowly circumscribed events, such as the battle of Sedan for instance to study; but a historian very rarely finds his task so 'well-cut and dried,' except when historywriting is in the academic stage of monograph hunting. On the contrary, a historian normally finds that his task is made infinitely complicated, as he has before him a congeries of events, which are connected with each other in interminable ways not altogether apparent to him. They share among themselves complicated strands of simultaneity, of elongation in chronological priority, and of spatial location, pattern, and circumvention. The problem of the historian is much more difficult than that of the physical scientist. He has to attempt to know a phenomenon which is no longer existentially there for him to know. The object of his attention is absent. "The position of the historian is like that of a 'geographer,' who is called upon to describe a mountain chain without instruments, with which to measure its length and breadth, the altitude

of its peaks and the depth of its valleys. In addition, the historian cannot even inspect the chain personally, because the chain has disappeared, and he has to be content with descriptions made by people who saw it but did not take measurements".

Here lies the great difference between the nature of phenomenon which the historian studies on the one hand, and which the natural scientist studies on the other. The historian lacks that direct contact with the object of his studies which in contrast to him the scientist so characteristically maintains. This immediate contact enables the scientist to use his peculiar method, namely, the method of observation and experiment, all the technique of inductive reasoning, and of observing, and experimenting on an object under controlled and controllable conditions. The use of this method is not possible for 'history'. The historian cannot observe any historical events whatsoever personally, except those that are contemporary with him—and even the contemporary events he can observe in a limited way, on account of the sheer physical impossibility of being present everywhere at the appropriate moment. Out of a series of events happening contemporaneously the historian can observe only a limited number, since even these consist largely of thoughts and actions of men mostly imperfectly known to him. The historian has little access to them first hand. As for the rest, even if he scrupulously interviews all those who took part, he comes across a multitude of accounts in the nature of legends, fabric-

cations, evasions, lies, lack of observation, and silence, which he cannot always break down with complete assurance. Under such conditions even passive observation of historical phenomenon is possible with the greatest difficulty. Past events are absent, and cannot be observed, while contemporary events are almost equally difficult to observe because of the difficulty of getting anywhere near them.

The contrast between history and physical sciences is still further accentuated by the impossibility of making any 'experiment' in history. Historical inquiry has to be conducted without any experiments. An experiment is observation under controlled conditions, with a view to differentiate between cause and effect, and in order to ascertain how a particular substance behaves under a calculated stimulus, and thus to determine the properties, "of substances, and their reactions towards one another. It is possible to carry out an experiment in the physical world, because it is possible to isolate the required substances in the laboratory, and to subject them to specified known conditions." This isolability, and an atomic property the physical substances do not share with historical events. In history, men, their thoughts, actions, ideals, and all the events that take place in the human world, do not lend themselves to an isolation of their component parts because they are interconnected and interdependent. Besides even if they are isolated in an ideational sphere, they cannot be brought under known conditions, condi-

tions which can be varied at will, with a view to making an experiment on them. Historical events are uncontrollable, and they cannot be pulled out of 'Time' because 'change' is their very essence. They cannot be pulled back with a mighty effort so as to happen again or so held in a vice as to prevent them from slipping into the realm of memory. Historical events are not irreversible. They will not stand still. Events immediately slip into the past and become facts and judgments. Under such conditions experiments are impossible. This is a great disadvantage to history, because in science great approximation to truth can be attained by repeated testing of hypothesis by fresh experiments. "Historical 'sciences' are those in which we cannot make experiments but are limited to studying what goes on in that order of time in which events happen to occur".<sup>1</sup>

(b) Another peculiar distinction that may be observed, between history and science, is the fact that science deals with events that recur, while history deals with unrepeatable occurrences. It is a fundamental postulate of the scientific method, subsequently confirmed by empirical considerations and inductive inferences that elements and substances behave uniformly under uniform conditions. These elements are either simple, rarified abstracted conceptions like quantity in mathematics or are universal types which are also abstracted general characteristics common to all members

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Myres : Dawn of History, p. 7.

of the species, as in the case of the biological sciences. Historical events differ from the abstract elements of mathematical and physical sciences, and also from the biological 'types'. They have an indivisible individuality. Every historical event is peculiar and non-recurrent, altogether unique, because all the explosive contact of conditions which make its occurrence possible are never repeated, and every historical event is new and unique. Thus physical sciences deal with abstracted, universal, departmental, and formalised conceptions, while history deals with the particular, individual, concrete, and rich experiential events. Science deals with systems of conceptions in which the conditions of space and time are irrelevant, within that particular system. Relative to that system, the uniformities of behaviour which are discovered in nature, are true without reference to any particular space-location or instant in time. On the other hand, a historical event is essentially bound up with a space-time pattern. There are therefore no uniformities in history, only unrepeatable and irreplaceable occurrences. The result of this difference we immediately notice in the ability of the physical and mathematical sciences to forecast the results that may be expected at any chosen moment in the future. This ability to predict with mathematical certainty has added enormously to the prestige of the physical sciences. They are enabled to do this on account of the highly abstract nature of their conceptions. Which react in a uniform fashion, whatever the moment of time that

is chosen for calculating their behaviour.

There are therefore no universal laws; in history. Kant at one time appears to have expected a Newton to discover them, "which should aim at unfolding to our view a regular stream of tendency in the great succession of events."<sup>1</sup> Buckle attempted to discover them, and as a general argument in favour of the existence of such laws showed that a uniform tendency can be seen in such statistical facts as uniform birth-rates, the constancy of suicides from year to year, in spite of the fact that births and suicides are acts of individuals who consider themselves free in such acts. Buckle's attempt was unsuccessful, and hardly any serious student of history to-day claims to find anything beyond patterns of general behaviour and probable tendencies.

The historical event is unique, by which is meant that it is completely individual, self-contained, and self-explanatory. Confluence of conditions produce it as a result, which does not recur because the same confluence is never repeated. Historical events are the result of an interaction of a series of interactions between Man and his Environment—between Humanity and Nature's resources—such as geographical situation of a country, the potential wealth of a land, the defensive-offensive possibilities of a battle-field, and soon. Nature's resources impose historic possibilities

<sup>1</sup> The Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmopolitan Plan : E. Kant. Tran. De. Quincey, p. 428.

inherent in themselves through the workings of universal physical laws. These material potentialities impose a diversity of action possible to man. In the moment of action the individual does not appreciate this limitation believing himself free to take any decision whatsoever. However, immediately he takes a definite action, the interaction of his activity on a given situation produces an irrevocable effect which for ever determines all succeeding events. It must be admitted that events by themselves, howsoever catastrophic in their effects, are not on that account alone historical, unless they affect man or produce a situation which man has to face. The formation of the solar system is not a historical event, but the deluge, assuming that it happened, is a historical event. History therefore is an interaction of mind and matter. It is a manifestation of life into action.

The uniqueness of an event does not mean that there are no generalities or that no universals of even a coarse nature are to be found in the stream of historic deposition, while the flood of life surges through the possibilities of matter. The existence of customs, of ideas, and institutions, of economic organisations all testify to the chaos of historic patterns. Similarly, the uniqueness of historic events does not mean that they are in any way wayward, an adventitious exuberance, an occurrence which cannot be explained by conditioning circumstances which posited them. Uniqueness is not an inexplicable mystifying quality. It is unique because it is like no other—;

this 'one and onliness' is the result of the fulness, richness, and variety of historic conditions, which are unrepeatable because of their very completeness and particularity. The conditions are particular, and the resulting event is unique.

Therefore, there is no such thing as 'Chance' in history. Usually we think of chance anthropomorphically as an agency, which like Puck intrudes and interferes catastrophically, and the more spectacular the unforeseen intrusion the greater is the feeling of powerful intangible fatality of chance. We call chance in, to explain a circumstance when though the event may be explicable from the conditions, a feeling is left in the mind that the cause, not immediately but totally, produces an effect out of all proportion to the immediate cause which may be trivial. The murder of Archduke Charles was a trivial cause of the war; similarly, the microbe that killed Alexander affected thereby the entire course of the history of the world. When small causes thus apparently produce disproportionate effects, even though the outbreak of the war of 1914-18 could easily be explained by larger and adequate causes, and the break up of Alexander's empire by its inherent instability, the suspicion of 'chance' creeps into the mind of the 'historian'. These small 'accidental causes' were really in the nature of occasions. When great events are happening or are about to happen as a result of perfectly adequate causes, chance metaphorically supplies the occasion for their emergence. The 'occasion' is very helpful to his-

torians, as it gives a stamp of chronological beginning to a rapid fermentation, which otherwise might have been and is often lost in the fog of "tendencies and forces".

All the same, we do not get in history that awe-inspiring finger of fatality, which our anthropomorphic religiosity and love of the dramatic so often suggests. But chance does exist in history in another sense, we find in history the existence "of a collusion of two unconnected sequences leading to a fortuitous occurrence. This fortuitous occurrence cannot be foretold, because two independent series of successive occurrences rigorously explicable in themselves, by a consequential and sequential order, nevertheless as if by accident contact each other and determine all subsequent results. The fall of a beam may be an entirely natural occurrence depending on the state of decay of the house. Similarly, the death of a man by the fall of the beam on his head may also be explicable by natural laws, but the synchronisation of the man being under the beam, and its falling was accidental. History is full of such occurrences, and those of them that lead to important results strike the imagination, and are easily recorded for the information of posterity. The discovery of America by Columbus was purely accidental but there was nothing of 'chance' in it. History abounds with examples when the "collusion of two unconnected sequences may be fraught with great results. The sudden death of a leader or a marriage without issue has affected political life."

## CHAPTER IV

### CAUSES OF FAILURE TO OBTAIN HISTORICAL CERTAINTY

These causes are no doubt many. A careful study of historical writing shows that this failure to give historically certain knowledge is shared both by historiography, and academic history. All we can expect from both of them is an opinion commenting on the probability of certain historical occurrences. Historical conclusions are of uncertain validity, because they are vitiated by the initial defect of the subject matter of historical study, by the nature of historical facts, and the method by which these facts are acquired.

Firstly, the historian has to rely upon documents, memoirs, anecdotes, traces of economic organisation, laws, customs, beliefs, institutions, myths, literature to find out the nature, and sequence of past events. All these are documents since they are "the thoughts and actions of men" of former times. These documents are some of them written but a majority of them are unwritten, the latter increasing in relative preponderance over the former as we move back in time. Partly because they are incomplete, and partly because they are by nature destructible,

both these types of documents are of a fragmentary character. As for the written documents, only those events which were unusual, and which attracted the attention of the recorder, but not necessarily the important ones were put down. The document shows and leaves a testimony of what the author of the document considered it worth recording, a judgment which may not be upheld by later historians or endorsed by posterity. The recorder is seldom actuated by unadulterated motives of love of record when he avails himself of opportunities for observation. One has only to remember the accounts written of their travels and adventures by publicists, during the last two decades to realise the utter callousness and disregard for truth, evinced by these so-called impartial observers. But even more than his moral integrity what affects the value of a recorder's document more, is his mental capacity, his general grasp, and intellectual ability. It is an easy enough task to judge whether the recorder had sufficient opportunity for observing at close quarters events and personalities he sought to convey to posterity, but it is far more difficult to form an accurate, and a just estimate of the mental and intellectual calibre of our so-called "authority" or recorder. The recorder is further influenced by his personal political, racial, religious, economic, moral, and social sympathies or antipathies, and they influence his record not only through what he records but even more through what he omits. With all those difficulties it is not easy for the investigator

to determine the exact degree of influence of these various factors, and to find out the probable truth, especially if the recorder has successfully and subtly veiled his personality. Is it then surprising that certainty is not easily to be found from historical documents? The historian requires a great insight to penetrate to the truth behind the evidence, and since this insight has more the quality of an intuitive and immediate clarity it lacks the rigour of a logical demonstration or of syllogistic finality. As Langlois and Seignobos point out the difficulty of knowing life from documentary evidence can be imagined from the value of a picture of modern life from way it is portrayed in modern novels.

Non-written documentary evidence is equally unsatisfactory though for slightly different reasons. It undergoes natural change in course of time with the result that it is no longer in the same condition as it was at the time in which the historian may be interested. Written documentary evidence does not change with time. It may be mutilated, forged, lost or re-interpreted but its original body is left unchanged by time. Unwritten documentary evidence, however, is more valuable to the historian than documentary written evidence as the latter is more easy to fabricate, and it can be more easily vitiated and interfered with by individuals, or small bodies of individuals. Unwritten documentary evidence is the product of social or natural phenomenon, and as such is more significant historically than the capricious testimony of written documents. The liability of non-written

documents to undergo change, and its consequent unsatisfactory nature is well illustrated by 'historical' changes in 'climate'. Climatic changes, for example, that have occurred in the Mediterranean world and in Central Asia, making them drier in historical times, was of immense historical significance, explaining many important changes and catastrophes, that have occurred. These climatic changes can be inferred and adduced as a brilliantly probable example of the categories of historical change but they cannot be measured on account of the lapse of time, the absence of a reliable and sufficient data, and the generally conjectural though highly probable nature of available evidence. Customs, economic organisation of society, and its social and religious practices are even more elusive than written evidence or evidence derived from natural phenomenon, such as climatic changes, geological formations, and architectural remains. The reason for this elusiveness is that as far as is known, these phenomena do not appear to follow uniform laws of variation, and it is impossible to recapture with exactitude their spirit and efficacy, once they have outgrown that particular form, in which the historian who proposes to know things exactly as they occurred, is interested. If the aim of historical study is as Von Ranke insists "to set forth what it was that actually occurred," it is almost impossible to attain it, except within very narrow limits owing to the limited and distorted nature of evidence. Earlier ages suffer from a scantiness of historical material, while

the modern age suffers from a redundancy much of which is a luxuriant growth, planted indiscriminately with a deliberate purpose of smoke-screening 'what it was that actually occurred'.

These written documents are normally referred to by historians as their 'authorities', and quite a few pitched battles are fought among the lower orders of the archivists regarding the relative reliability of their respective 'gods'. The foundation on which the academic historian relies for the elements of his story are certain sources, whom he chooses to call his 'authorities', and whose testimony after critical examination, he accepts as true. The authorities are therefore not really authoritative at all, since they need critical appraisal. The rule, which the historian applies for ascertaining their veracity is that "statements by contemporary witnesses which are probable, and are not falsified by other equally creditable witnesses, may be accepted as true".<sup>1</sup> This, however, is a criterion of what *could* happen under certain circumstances, and not of what *did* happen. It is knowledge based upon probability, and not on certainty, because the critical historian decided whether a thing happened or not, according to whether it could have happened without offending the way in which natural phenomenon normally occurs. He can therefore tell us "what is against nature, and not what is against history".<sup>2</sup> Thus the whole

<sup>1</sup> Collingwood: *The Historical Imagination*, p. 8-12.

<sup>2</sup> Collingwood: *The Historical Imagination*, p. 11.

activity of the historian is based on probability, and at best he can discover what is most likely to have happened, and not "what it was that actually happened". In fact the historian is without any authorities whatsoever because he criticises, weighs, and attempts to find "gold from dross". He has properly speaking no unchallengeable data, because all he has is a number of highly probable conclusions about the occurrence of certain events, which for his purposes he accepts as facts, and which he joins into a sequential order, and by the exercise of his *a priori* imagination gives them a logical unity. "It is thus the historian's picture of the past, the product of his *a priori* imagination that has to justify the source used in its construction."<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, the historians have always held, though most of them have done so quite unconsciously, an erroneous view regarding the nature of historical facts. To them facts appear to have a self-contained molecular existence, which when discovered have to be arranged in a chronological order, and from this ordered sequence they hope to reconstruct a historical narrative with the aid of the mortar of historical imagination. This procedure leads to an absurd result. If the historian attempts to give all the facts that he has discovered, he finds that they make a haphazard, ill-digested collection of facts partly known, and partly in a conjectural and hypothetical stage. Many relevant facts are not known at all, and still

<sup>1</sup> Collingwood: The Historical Imagination, p. 20.

more are only imperfectly known. If, on the other hand, the historian selects only a few facts relevant to a certain problem he may have in view he makes what amounts to an arbitrary selection. The mutual connection between these facts cannot be certain and necessary, because in making the selection of facts the historian assumes a relation between them, which he really sought to prove by an appeal to these very facts. The position becomes this : A problem is suggested by the facts, and the facts are selected according to their relevance to this very problem—a knot in which a historian can, and often does completely tie himself.

Hence several historical writers and archivists have given up hopes of truly accurate and complete knowledge as a final goal. "Those, however, who believe that history can supply complete or final verdicts forget....the immensity and complexity of the ground to be covered. Any historical event....would involve, if it were traced with complete scientific accuracy, the life-history of many millions of men and women, nearly all of them utterly unknown to us to-day, yet each of them a living personality growing and changing under stress of circumstances and influences constantly in flux. The totality of past experience and action among European men and women or even in the English nation alone in a limited period, presents a theme so vast and intricate that we can only discuss it at all by making certain formulae or historical generalisations which cover and shroud the variety and rich-

ness of the past."<sup>1</sup> When it is realised that the historical writers do not even intend to give us all the facts that they collect but only a selected few of them, it is not difficult to imagine why historical knowledge is found practically impossible to attain. Further, even if the historian by a miraculous stroke of lucky chance is enabled to discover all their spatial correlation, and temporal sequence, he does not need them all nor can he use them in his synthetic presentation. He only incorporates those facts, by the use of what some historians prefer to call the 'associative faculty' as distinct from imagination, that are relevant to his immediate problem, and attempts to synthesise them in a form, which will not only give them a logical unity and intelligibility but also will be consistent with a whole of which it forms a part. The historians prefer to call it an 'associative faculty,' because they contend that the historical facts have a relation among themselves which is not only sequential but also consequential and necessary. The historians argue that their selection of facts is not arbitrary; the facts have a necessary relevance with regard to each other. They dovetail into each other with a logical necessity, and all that the historian has to do is to perceive this underlying association, which is there apart from himself, and independent of his intrusion. This associative necessity between facts selected by the historian after he has compiled them, is true to a limited extent, because though the facts are not molecular independent substances, they do

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Trevelyan: Truth in History (Essay) p. 8.

form larger or smaller systems of factual judgments depending on the principle of cohesion underlying them. But they are capable of forming more than one comprehensive system according to the particular point of view of the historian. That is why, with substantially the same systems of facts two different historians can produce two quite different versions as to what in their opinion 'really happened' on unimpeachable evidence. The historians enjoy a real autonomy, almost a caprice in their synthetic selection of facts, which makes it possible for their bias, prejudices, and dogmas, however unconsciously, to enter the process, and to vitiate the result.

This autonomy for selection was alleged by the archivists to have been abused by ancient historiographers and 'popularisers' of history. The academic historian, for ever shy of a betrayal of feeling or partiality, and keen on maintaining a diplomatic correctness, thoroughly condemned it. He complained that the old historiographers romanticised, and projected their own feelings in the accounts of actions portrayed by them. Their condemnation of the so-called 'popularisers of history' was equally strong. "Men whose information is all that could be desired, whose monographs intended for specialists are full of merits, are sometimes capable.... of grave offences against the scientific method....; the reason is that these authors.... wish to produce an effect.... Their desire to make a strong impression leads them to a certain relaxation of scientific rigour, and to the old rejected habit of

historiography....”<sup>1</sup>. This temptation to ‘romanticise,’ is particularly irresistible for the historiographers when great personalities or villains, as the case may be, who by their audacity, ability, and destiny dazzle the imagination of subsequent ages, are a subject of their inquiry. By a poetic fallacy the feelings aroused in their own minds when they comprehend a cross-section of the historical past are attributed by these historians to those who took part in it. Their own passions and values are reflected in the motives and sentiments which according to them inspired the historical personages. “Hence arises,” said Vico, “the habit of interpreting ancient customs in the expectation of finding them similar or superior to those of modern civilised life. Thus Cicero admired the humanity of early Romans in calling their enemies war guests, not realising that the fact was precisely the opposite of this, and that guests were hosts, strangers and, enemies.”<sup>2</sup> The historiographer and the populariser of history no doubt meets an important demand from the public, who want history to be written in such a way as will create the local atmosphere of the time about which the history is written. It is, however, a futile demand because it can never be completely satisfied. No historian can so transform himself as to forget his own age, and all the ages that followed the particular one which may be the subject he is

<sup>1</sup> Langlois and Seignobos : Introduction to the Study of History, p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> B. Croce : Philosophy of G. Vico, p. 155.

engaged on studying. The immediate past as well as the present inevitably and irrevocably binds us to the remoter past, and determines our interest in it as well as our horizon of comprehending it.

The archivist or the academic historian attempted to get out of this difficulty by suppressing all his love, passion, and values in contemplating his subject, and considered it his duty, to narrate the past events in the form of a dispassionate, objective, and colourless presentation, of what actually happened in the past—neither more nor less. History to the archivist was nothing more than the factual external events. The erudite was no doubt justified in a certain way in his condemnation of those who romanticised, and in producing works of history succeeded in displaying romances. But the colourless presentation of the historian is hardly enough, because history is not a mere recitation of actual events as they occurred in chronological, and juxtapositional succession, even if the definition of history as given by the archivist, namely, that it is an account of events as they actually occurred, were to be accepted. The psychological, phenomenon or the moral force that is often the motive force behind an individual's or a people's historical achievement, and with which every narration of actual events must be impregnated, is as historical a fact, as the activational, external or factual, event that the erudite so faithfully, methodically, and according to his own lights so dispassionately records, and therefore must be presented in all its depth and variety. This is by no means easy, especially

if the purpose is to discover the psychological outlook, and moral atmosphere of a historical age exactly as it existed. We can undoubtedly infer it but we cannot comprehend or understand it. Who can with anything like certainty fathom the moral and psychological outlook of the ancient Spartans, for example, or of the modern Japanese? The academic monk in his enthusiasm for hard, cold, brutal facts is unlikely to succeed, if he tries to infer the psychological undertone and moral background that accompanies all historical events, from dead parchments which are by no means a very adequate means of keeping, and preserving them. Thus in a vital matter connected with historical events as 'they really occurred' the academic historian is apt to be unfortunate. By the very nature of his inquiry, which deals with events that occurred a very long time ago, and with persons whose problems, passions, reactions, and moral frame was buried with them, the historiographer as well as the archivist has insufficient contact with his material. The sense of immediacy and urgency, which is associated in the minds of those who live through historical processes, is lost to later generations, and it cannot be recovered in all its fulness and multiformity. That is the reason why the keen suffering of a warring generation is not felt or appreciated in all its poignancy and desolation by the generations that succeed it.

Thirdly, historians especially historiographers have always attempted to explain historical events by reference to the personal agencies, and motives

of great and powerful men, who to this day are considered by a great majority of historians, and by the public at large as the impelling power, the motive force that fashioned and accomplished the acts—known as the events in history. That individual decisions and acts of will have great influence on the policies and public acts of nations is only too obvious from the baleful influence Hitler exerted in Nazi Germany. Experience in daily life, as well as the deliberately willed actions in one's own life, makes it very easy not only to believe in personal causation, but it also gives mental reactions a peculiarly narcissist tendency. As a consequence of this one is apt to look for a personal causal influence behind every single or multiple historical event. Men who are normally agents in actions are looked upon as being their prime movers. There is very little doubt, of course, that characters and motives of persons, particularly of those who are in power, have a great influence on the nature of decisions that are from time to time taken in public affairs; but there is no need to exaggerate this influence into an all-embracing explanation of historical activation. It is quite possible, for example, to doubt if the French Revolution would have taken the course it did, if Louis XVI had had a less vacillating character, and greater firmness of purpose. Kaiser William II repeatedly brought his country to the brink of war simply because he had an irrepressible flair for the dramatic. Personal caprice has always acted powerfully particularly in its negative aspect. Great nations have

had disaster brought to them through the capricious agencies of persons whose character has repeatedly ruined the historical prospects of a people. Spain in modern times is very obvious example. She is a nation with important potential mineral wealth. She enjoyed a racial and religious privilege in Central and South America which could have been very much better exploited. Her central position in the land hemisphere, and the naturally high defensive value of her frontiers are all factors which should have made Spain a nation of the first rank if her kings, and noblemen had shown greater wisdom and awareness of national purpose. We find many examples when personal motives have decided public actions of men in power. Thucydides mentions how Pericles was supposed to have embarked on the Peloponnesian War on account of difficulties he was experiencing with 'the opposition' in Athens. Dictators are generally credited to follow a spirited foreign policy in order to distract attention of the nation from domestic difficulties. It is, however, very easy on account of our ingrained anthropomorphism to exaggerate the influence of character and motives on historical events, because though the character and motives of persons remain one of the important and integral factors among historical determinants, "at every point at which human volition comes into play in history, we find that limits are set to its influence, and the nature of every event, which it partly determines, is also determined by countless other factors, which are not expressly

volitional in character."<sup>1</sup>

A survey of historical writing clearly shows the general belief of historical writers and archivists—belief all the more powerful in influencing their writing, because it is implicitly taken for granted and not explicitly avowed—that for a complete understanding of any historical problem, a historian must understand the principles of human motivation, and it is generally considered an excellence of the historiographic art to give pen-portraits of the chief characters in history, their weaknesses, and the motives that determined their decisions. Napoleon was known to study the lives of generals opposed to him. This is perfectly justifiable but the historian is apt to underestimate the difficulties that he has to overcome if he is to fathom the character and motives of historical personages. He does not realise the difficulties of knowing intimately persons who are no longer there, and only facets of whose personalities are dimly described by us through the hazy medium of documents.

Therefore, every writer of history must face the fact that when he attempts to determine personal character, and the motives of historical personages, he is on very uncertain ground, and cannot claim exactness for his analysis. The chief reasons are the following: (a) It is by no means easy to ascertain with any exactness the real motives of persons, especially when the problems that confronted them

<sup>1</sup> Mandelbaum : The Problem of Historical Knowledge, p. 309.

are only dimly present to us, through the medium of a few rough-drawn systems of facts. "Facts which we did not see, described in a language which does not permit us to represent them in our minds with exactness form the data of history."<sup>1</sup> If the problem itself is not clear to us can we be justified in dogmatising from it, regarding the character and motives of persons who had to face those problems, and to solve them? (b) It is even more uncertain to determine how far private motives encroach on public policy of great men. Writers of history are not always as fortunate as they are when they have to decide this question, for example, in the case of Henry VIII's foreign and religious policy. Henry VIII advertises it with the most unusual directness. He does not keep us in ignorance about the private motive which persuaded him to establish an independent national Church in England. Naturally such examples are rare. Shall we ever know what personal considerations were involved in Napoleon's march on Moscow or in Hitler's attack on Russia? (c) Besides, how insufficient, fragmentary, and screened are characters of persons as shown in the 'sources'? The sources may be authentic enough. But whether they are contemporary or traditional, the character of persons as portrayed in them suffers either from ennoblement and adoration or from calumny and misrepresentation. The men who write about his-

<sup>1</sup> Langlois and Seignobos : Introduction to the Study of History, p. 221.

torical persons are often men of inferior character, ability, and moral fibre compared to men about whom they write. Further, the accounts that are left of great men are generally written by persons who are favourably or unfavourably interested in them, and their account is biased to that extent. The bias is not always apparent, and clever writers generally succeed in camouflaging the personal equation by the subtlety of their art. The personal equation of the writer is there nevertheless. It is hidden as it were behind a smoke-screen. When historians talk about principles of motivation, and apply them, they have the ordinary human being of everyday life in mind. With considerable, first-hand experience of human nature, it is easy enough to ascertain the general nature of motives that usually lie behind human actions, for they are as is rightly claimed, generally true to type, but it is quite another matter to be able to determine them with anything approaching exactness in particular cases, especially in the case of great personalities of history, whose capacity for mental and moral activity is superior to, and certainly different from the average person. Who can say what motives lay behind the actions of men like Jesus Christ, Buddha, an Alexander or Napoleon? Who can confidently say what motives and inspirations lie behind the subtle, ever-shifting, and mercurial actions and reactions of a man like Mr. Gandhi?

This difficulty about finding the true character of historical persons is made really worse because character and motives are by no means simple ato-

mic categories. They are a complex phenomenon, and generally possess a uniqueness which reflects the individuality of the person to whom they are ascribed. They are the windows which often shift their position, and through them the light of personality shines outward. The motives that determine one's own very ordinary actions are so mixed, and the individual share of these motives in the decisions we take is so uncertain, that it is difficult to ascertain and unravel their complicated strands, even in cases where actions are immediately present to us. Under the circumstances it is impossible to exaggerate the difficulties of a historian who attempts to find motives for actions, with scientific exactness, actions that have been performed long ago, and to determine the motives of persons that no longer exist.

Fourthly, a great source of wrong valuation in the method of the academic historian lies in the fact that he considers contemporary evidence necessarily superior to the testimony of later days. The presumption arises from the fact that the historian ~~thinks~~ it obvious that if a witness was present at the time of occurrence, his report would be far nearer the actual truth than that of one who was removed from the scene of events either in space or time or both.

This assumption of the academic historian is only partially justified. It is true only when the witness is trying merely to affirm or deny the occurrence of an event. Confusion seems to exist among historians regarding the difference between what is

called an event and what is to be understood as 'fact.' For example, a flash of lightning is an event but the occurrence of the flash of lightning is a fact. When a witness states a bare fact he affirms or denies the occurrence of an event. But when the witness attempts to go beyond simple affirmation or denial of an occurrence of an event, he is not making one judgment as he did in the case of a mere affirmation or denial, but he is making more than one implied judgment. For example, the witness may say that the flash of lightning occurred at 9-30 p.m. In this synthetic judgment he makes first a judgment affirming the occurrence of the flash, and then another judgment to state that the time was 9-30 p.m., and from these two separate judgments he makes one statement. Now this combined judgment going as it does beyond a mere affirmation or negation is logically no more rigorous than the judgment that can be made by a witness who may make a judgment about the occurrence of the lightning, without being a contemporary witness of that occurrence.

Further, in the evaluation of events which is the proper function of historical judgments, contemporary testimony is faulty, because "the knowledge of what a past really is often comes in the life of an individual years later than the fact itself. The very persons who are directly responsible for a given fact as a rule do not know it or know it in a very imperfect and fallacious manner." (Vico) The men who let Lenin go to Russia had not the ghost of an idea of what would eventually happen as a

result of it. To take another significant example, the inventor of the steam-engine hardly understood the revolution he was beginning in human life as a result of which a series of changes have occurred, which deepen the significance of his invention with each passing generation.

## CHAPTER V

### HISTORISMUS

The selection of facts, after they have been discovered, tested, sifted, and arranged is the most difficult problem, from the point of view of the historian. It brings the whole question of the relation of a part to the whole, of the particular to the universal, into the forefront. But the problem is complicated still further for the historian by the position, that the systems of facts which he selects for his synthesis are influenced by the life, philosophy, and social and economic conditions, in which he works. The picture of the historian is not only partial, i.e., a selection of the whole mass of data but it also depends on the way he poses the problem. The systems of facts are not merely to be perceived photographically. If photographic perception was all that was required of the historian, historical knowledge would be altogether a mechanical process like that of a brick and mortar construction of standardised houses if only one knew all the rules. It is, however, much more than that, as the historiographer as well as the archivist tells us. Facts, he says, must be valued and comprehended, but this comprehension depends on the dominant philosophy of life during the age in which the historian 'moves and

has his being." This philosophy of life determines for the historian the point of view from which he should select and group his facts. An Indian historian of the 16th or 17th century, for example, scorned to look at facts that reflected the life and conditions of the mass of the common people of the land, thinking not only that the historian should be chiefly interested in the activity and will of the 'king and his Court,' but he honestly believed in accordance with the intellectual tradition of the times that the common people did not participate in creative and eventful activity. But his successor, the historian of to-day, considers the condition of the masses of the people as of the highest importance for a true and successful historical inquiry. It is thus that civilisation appraises its past, and poses problems to the past, in the light of those which it faces itself, and which it seeks to solve. The historian almost literally is the child of his age, and cannot rise above the dominant determinants of the epoch in which he lives. That is why as Goethe would have it "history is perpetually re-written"; new problems are created, proposed, and solved; every new generation finds the accepted conclusions of its fathers inadequate.

History, thus, is the "intellectual form in which a civilisation renders account to itself." It is not all that happened in the past that is history. It is only that past which is intelligible to the inquirer, who is 'the civilisation,' which seeks to understand it. According to this school, history is neither a reconstruction of the past round some focal point

nor is it an exact photographic reproduction of the past. The historian is a child of the social totality and creative activity of that particular epoch, in which he lives. The problem, which he seeks to understand in the past is proposed by him, in accordance with the earnest moral and intellectual requirements of his age. This 'contemporaneous' interest gives history an earnestness that is entirely lacking in literature, and that alone is true history which "vibrates in the soul of the historian."

That is why portions of the past which are unintelligible, and without interest for centuries are revived, and acquire an altogether new meaning. A Renaissance or intérêt in antiquity hitherto undreamt of is not a mere shedding off of intellectual lethargy or waking from the superstitious sleep of 'Dark Ages'; nor is it a matter of historical accidents. It is fresh activities of the 'spirit of the age' which transforms the past, and gives it value. The ancient civilisations with all their historic documents lay buried physically as well as metaphorically, for countless generations, until the modern civilisation made them alive, valuable and comprehensible at this stage of its growth. The best expression of this school is to be found in Croce's theory of 'history'. "These revivals have altogether interior motives, and no wealth of documents or of narratives will bring them about. Indeed it is they themselves that copiously collect and place before themselves documents and narratives which without them will have remained scattered and inert. And it will be impossible even to understand anything of the effective process

of historical thought, unless we start from the principle that the spirit itself is history, maker of history at every moment of its existence, and also the result of all anterior history; thus the spirit bears with it all the history which coincides with itself. To forget one aspect of history, and to remember another one is nothing but the rhythm of the life of the spirit, which operates by determining and individualising itself, and by always rendering indeterminate and disindividualising previous determinations and individuations, in order to create others more copious".

This school thus depicts the 'spirit', 'the age', 'the epoch', 'the civilisation' inquiring, posing, and resolving historical problems. The school is, however, open to two important objections. (a) It fosters a tendency among historians to sacrifice historical objectivity. Systems of facts lose for it their independent existential reality. They become real only in so far as they are significant to the historian through whom the spirit of civilisation inquires. Thus this school is apt to lose sight of the ultimate fact that events occur in their own right and necessity, whether they are significant or not. The theory which this school gives regarding the way historical inquiry is conducted is admirable enough but the objectivity of historical happenings is one of the co-efficients of historical knowledge, and must not be lost sight of. (b) The school gives the 'determinants' 'age' 'epoch,' etc., an existential supra-

real tangibility which savours of animism. They acquire 'ghost-like' qualities being behind every historical event in a shadowy fashion, and the historian is tempted to manouvre them as the veritable *Dieu ex Machina*.

## CHAPTER VI

### CATEGORY OF MATERIAL LIMITATIONS

A historical event is a manifestation of life's activity. Once it has been accomplished, i.e., once it has become a historical fact, it can be studied with a view to discovering (a) the nature of the emergent novel event, and (b) the features in the event which indicate and substantiate the existence of a general tendency in the entire series of events. It must be noted that a series of events are not independent crystallised atomic facts joined together juxtapositionally, like pearls in a necklace. Nor are they the inevitable jerks in a series of occurrences experienced as they were pushed down the stairs as if by a first cause. A series of events does not exist as a series at all. It is a convenient description for purposes of understanding. Events are connected with each other as assimilated parts of a realised situation. Further, this situation is never at a standstill, i.e., is never completely realised. It is continuously unrolling emergent events and absorbing them. The process of history is an ever-active, new fermentation.

The series of events are not like a thin pencil of light. They are more like a vast ever-mingling

flow of streams, which flow into each other, and after merging flow out again in endless ways. However, the emergent novelties are by no means wayward. They are circumscribed by environmental limitations. The boundless possibilities of emergent novelties have to take place within certain definite specified physical limitations. They do not happen in *vacuo*. It has been the practice of certain historians to treat physical environment more as stage on which 'historical drama' takes place. "The claim of geography to be heard in the councils of history rests on the firm basis that, it alone studies comprehensively and scientifically by its own method and technique, the setting of human activity, and that the particular characteristics of this setting serve not only to localise but also to influence part at least of the action." This analogy of stage as applied to physical environment in history is like all analogies suggestive but not exact. For, (i) in drama the stage is passive and empty. It does not very materially affect the event that takes place on it, unless indirectly it may be said to influence the mind of the playwright who naturally has the stage in mind when he writes the play. But the stage does not affect the events in the play itself. (ii) Historical events differ from events as shown on the stage in one more respect. The events in history are scattered in place, time, and action, unlike those in drama which are professionally supposed to observe a successful integration of the three unities.

The environment in history may be divided into two parts. (a) The natural physical resources, such as agricultural potential, mineral wealth, and marine facilities in the nature of a coastline and so on. These are the main environmental raw material without which no society can progress but they can easily be multiplied. These are inert potentials which under the germinating power of man's activity produce the material aspects of a civilisation. Agricultural civilisations of the Nile, Euphratis, the Ganges, and the Hoang-Ho, testify as much as the marine, and coal resources of England, mineral resources of U.S.A., and Russia to the important part material resources play in the progressive manifestation of history. (b) Climate is an equally powerful factor in deciding the activity of men. It affects activity in two ways. (i) By affecting vegetation, and thus deciding the way man will seek his livelihood. Climatic conditions may produce a tropical forest with its pestilential vermin and disease, and thick impenetrable vegetation. Man, under the circumstances, can only clear patches in the jungle, and indulge in occasional cultivation. Climate may be responsible for vast deserts, which are mostly unfit for human life, except round the oasis, and thus profoundly affect the way of life which is almost dictated by nature. Cold deserts make human life in them even less secure as there are no equivalents of oasis in it, and the search for game is almost boundless. The vegetation in subtropical regions, and in temperate regions is such as to make it possi-

ble to pursue a variety of occupations, provided other factors are favourable. Thus cattle and sheep farming in grasslands, agricultural occupations in fertile lowlands, forestry in wooded hills and plains are all made possible. They vary from one temperate region to another according to the distribution and amount of rainfall, and the nature of the soil of the region. (ii) But climate also affects human activity in a much more subtle way. It is capable, when moist and hot, of sapping energy by its enervating influence, just as a moderately cool and healthy climate can make mental and physical exertion much less exhausting. Every historical act has two co-efficients. One is the physical environment in which, and through which the act is expressed, and the second is the human will directing this activity. Climate affects this second co-efficient of will by denying to it the energy to resist, and overcome difficulties physical as well as human. Several observations carried out by Dr. Ellsworth Huntington showed that changes in humidity and temperature, other factors remaining the same, had a measurable effect on the effective work done by persons working under conditions of these changes.

But the claim of climate to have controlling influence in history is based on a much more ambitious evidence. The conclusions drawn from changes in the level of water in lakes over a period of a few thousand years, and changes in the rate of growth of trees show that humidity

and climatic conditions generally have not been uniform. Considerable climatic changes have taken place making dry lands drier, and wet lands wetter. The areas of North Africa, Asia Minor, and Central Asia were wetter than they are to-day. Similarly during historical times an alternating pulsation of storminess and comparative calmness over long periods has been observed. For example, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were stormier in Europe than the centuries before them, and after them.

It is argued by a powerful school that catastrophic events in history such as the invasions of the Tartars and Arabs, and the fall of civilisations in Rome, Babylon, of the Incas, and at Angkor, and elsewhere can ultimately be traced to the effects produced by these climatic changes. The changes usually mean an effect on the productivity of the lands with their changed capacity to support a growing population. In historic times, Central Asia started suffering from repeated droughts which later became a permanent feature. It could no longer, therefore, produce enough to support its population. As a result from it issued out those vast conquering hordes, which changed several times the history of empires, and left behind themselves nothing but a nightmare, and the memory of a curse.

Though it is true that material conditions have a limiting influence on achievement, and that therefore geography can very considerably explain historical events, the material conditions are nevertheless passive. They are inert, and only

the active will of man impregnates them with significance. This is evident from the fact that the European immigrants in North America have transformed the country into a prosperous agricultural and industrial area capable of maintaining a very large population at a high standard of living. The same geographical conditions did not induce the Red Indians to develop their country beyond what was essentially a nomadic and pastoral condition of life. The reason for the difference lies in the different scientific and technical level of knowledge of the two peoples. Material conditions are pliable, and readily respond to the technical knowledge and skill brought to bear upon them. Major changes in human activity, and therefore, in history arise out of changed methods in technique of dealing with material problems. Domestication of the horse meant a revolution in agriculture and war. The adoption of agriculture changed human society from a pastoral and nomadic manner of life to that of isolated settled village communities. The use of metal revolutionised the early life of man by enabling him to make his weapons and implements, stronger, more complicated, and durable. How radically conditions of human life have altered on account of scientific inventions, machinery and steam, oil and electrical motive power, is only too obvious. The category of material limitations is therefore an important category of historical activity but it must be remembered that it does not prove materialistic determination.

## CHAPTER VII

### HISTORICAL CATEGORIES

As explained in the preceding chapter, it is the participation of the human will in the capacity of an active, motivating power that gives historical events their emergent novelty. A historical event differs from a cosmological occurrence in this that the former is a result of an integration between physical conditions and participating human personality, unlike the latter.

Since motivation by human agency is so important for the fulfilment of historical acts, those pulls on consciousness which impel it to a decision are important historical factors. It will be found that individual or social actions of men are determined by certain ideas or convictions that are held by the individual or the social unit, as the case may be. These ideas impel the will to act in a certain way. They influence the decision. An act is deliberately willed by conscious personality in response to a situation. In the decision that is taken by a person, his convictions regarding the physical universe, regarding fellow human beings, and regarding himself play a vital part. These convictions are in the nature of ideas—or beliefs. They are not intellectual

or conceptual ideas, they are moral ideas. There is a difference of category between these two types of ideas. The intellectual or conceptual ideas are true or false ; they are not good or bad. Similarly, moral ideas are either good or bad, but they are not true or false. Intellectual conceptual ideas do not affect will or human action. They have got to become beliefs before they could affect the will, and thus affect historical activity. Moral ideas therefore gush forth human history but intellectual ideas do not. The intellectuals and philosophers in so far as they merely hibernate in intellectual atmosphere are outside the pale of historic activity. That is perhaps why all the philosophical thought of the Hindus so long as it confined itself to scholasticism was sterile in the historical field.

Philosophers do not affect history but religious leaders do, because while the former dwell in the light of intellectual concepts, the latter transform history by gripping the will of men with new beliefs. It is ideas that induce faith, and not ideas which are true, which shape historical activity.

Therefore, change in the beliefs of a people, and in the patterns of their reactions is always accompanied by changes in historical activity. If a change of beliefs is rapid or is forced through the activity of a small but energetic group, historical change takes place by quick adjustments. If, however, a belief gains ground slowly there is a slow social fermentation. How belief alters history can be seen by the single but significant example

of modern European history. The modern European civilisation is principally embodied in the Reformation, and scientific advancement. Both of them were the consequence of a fundamental change in outlook, consisting of a gradually increasing confidence in the capacity of the individual to arrive at exact knowledge by intellectual processes. This individualism and intellectualism together with a moral attitude of utilitarianism produced the modern world in Europe.

The more intensely a belief is held the more far-reaching consequences does it have on the acts of individuals, and on the historic destiny of a people. Martyrs may not influence history radically along the way they may wish to do, but they are nevertheless disturbing elements, which divert and canalise historical emergence. Christian martyrdom, and orientation of values, for example, set a moral ideal which became a powerful civilising influence. Another useful example of the same type is the foundation of the faith of Islam, which led to the unification of a Race and to the political and military power of the Arabs, which in its own age was incomparable in strength. In the 20th century communism has displayed the same power, which a belief strongly held produces. Beliefs strengthen the will of those that hold them. A belief in order to be effective in history need not be either true or good. It is sufficient for it to be held so as to give the will of the individual holding it the firmness of purpose to act. The Nazi's belief in his superiority was neither true nor morally

justified but he held it with a conviction that drove him to act on it. Most people in India find it difficult to defend the system of caste but the idea of caste, however, morally reprehensible, is nevertheless so firmly entrenched in Hindu consciousness that every Hindu acts with a belief in its self-evidence. Thus in order to understand historical activity completely it is necessary to obtain a sympathetic understanding of the beliefs held by those who participated, willingly or unwillingly, in that historical activity. It explains adequately the vivid, self-justifying motive which makes men act the way they do. Some beliefs are shared by a few individuals, and they die with those individuals. Fashionable creeds and attitudes that spring in drawing-rooms, and coffee-clubs to go on for a few years are an instance in point. No belief which cannot transcend the individual is historically endurable or historically active. The belief must be acted upon, i.e., it must be volitionally active. That is why dreamers and mere thinkers, howsoever passionate in their belief, fail to be historically active. Unless beliefs take the form of action, and thus transcend the individuals holding them, they remain idle wishes and romantic make-believe historically impotent. Action implies an externalisation of belief into an act. But the scope of beliefs is limited if they fail to be beliefs of not a small number of individuals but of a whole group.

This scope of beliefs to be historically active increases if they are shared by several generations.

When they are so shared they are externally authenticated in the form of institutions. Institutions have one inestimable advantage over the beliefs shared by a group of individuals. They endure and maintain the tradition and vividness of belief, which would otherwise have withered by the weakness or demise of individuals who first held those beliefs. That is why institutions survive the zeal of founders as well as of reformers. An established institution is necessary in order to maintain the workability and propagation of a belief into a 'way of life.' If it were not for the establishment of the Church it is doubtful if Christianity would have endured after the first Apostles to become the powerful historical factor that has been. Institutions give beliefs a constancy, and a continuity of historic effectiveness which they would have otherwise lacked. Beliefs are held by a group of people, and the institutions enforce and guide their observance. The difficulty about institutions is that once an institution is well founded it is not very easy for it to change or evolve. It therefore often fails to keep abreast with change in beliefs. Sometimes by means of persecution institutions try to suppress the growth or the propagation of beliefs which they consider injurious to themselves. Institutions create dogma and vested interests which often need violent efforts of non-conformists to dislodge them or to adapt them to changed, conditions of beliefs.

Institutions are of many types, and are to be found in all human activity. But from the historical

point of view religious, political, and social institutions are most significant because they touch man's life as man. Between them comprehensively regulate the activities of man. The most powerful religious institutions in the life of modern man have been the Christian Church, the Buddhist Church, and the Caliphate. Few other organisations can be compared to them in their persuasive and enduring power to hold the minds of men, and to propagate the beliefs embodied by them. Among social institutions of comparable power to regulate the minds of men through the beliefs they hold may be classed the Totemistic tribal organisations, and the Caste system of the Hindus. They are incomparable in elaboration and the minuteness or detail which they enjoin. Two outstanding examples in the political field suffice to show the way in which institutions may embody 'ways of life.' The Spartan oligarchy was a most remarkable historical institution, because it endured with very little change for several centuries, and thereby ensured the continuation of an elaborate way of life—in which the Spartans believed. Another noteworthy example is in modern times though it is of an altogether different type of an institution. The British institution of political democracy embodies the ideals of freedom of the individual, the rule of law, and self-government, through a Parliament. Though there is no elaborate constitution the institution of parliamentary democracy nevertheless embodies the potent political beliefs of the people. These

institutions enable us to contact with greater intimacy the beliefs on which the historic activity of peoples was grounded. Institutions therefore become focal points in the elaboration of historical activity....much of which centres round these institutions, and is inspired by self-same beliefs which originally brought institutions into being.

But some beliefs do not acquire a stratified elaboration of institutions because they do not affect the normal routine of life but are moral springs of action which rush into actuality on certain unusual provocation. They are categories of historical actuality, nevertheless. The most potent force during recent centuries at any rate in Europe has been the sentiment of nationality. A large group of people have developed a sense of national affinity called nationhood. The British, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, etc., have each developed a deep-rooted sense of belonging to a single group, and as being distinct though not necessarily fundamentally different from one group to another. It was common history and common interests in the case of the British, while language and race together with leadership of a strong centrifugal state was the dominant determinant in the case of the Germans. Countries like Spain, France, and England have had national sentiment developed earlier than other countries, because of their favourable geographical frontiers, and the existence of a strong Central Government in them. In Poland unfavour-

able conditions obstructed it, and in Italy it was retarded by foreign rule, by the existence of warring, jealous principalities, and owing to the peculiar position of the spiritual power in relation to the temporal power. In Asia national sentiment has not become a powerful cementing force of an aggressive type. Wherever it has shown itself, it has been more or less in the form of exasperation and dislike of foreigners rather than a sense of common affinity. It has produced movements akin to a national sentiment but being in the nature of a reaction have not had the same enduring unifying passion.

Much of the recent history of the world has been dominated by the nationalist idea. It grew powerfully in the 19th century, and as a result of it Germany and Italy were unified, and the Austrian and Turkish Empires were disrupted. The World War I (1914-18) was quite as much an outcome of the struggle of nationalities for self-determination, as of any other force. It was believed for some time that the growth of socialism and internationalism would undermine nationalist sentiments but World War II has shown that nationalism is still a powerful incentive, and is likely to remain so for some time to come. The spontaneous growth of national resistance in the countries occupied by Germany in World War II, showed that feeling of national affinity was not only alive but that it was powerful also.

One often comes across historical inquirers suggesting activity of generalities....called 'histo-

rical forces'. Romantic historians often darkly suggest that historical change is the result of mysterious, inexorable manifestation of effervescent causal currents called 'Forces'. This belief in 'forces' is an animistic efflorescence. No 'historical forces,' as such apart from individuals acting through their beliefs exist. Historical forces are a conceptual device but have no historic causal existence. They may be looked upon as a convenient conceptual means of expressing the tendencies of beliefs which canalise historic action. Historical forces have no germinating power as beliefs have, because the forces are ghostlike substances while the beliefs imply volitional action of believers. The uniformities noticeable in history are the consequence of similar limiting material conditions or are the result of a concurrent one-way volitional direction of beliefs.

The problem or pseudo-problem of historical forces brings out yet another philosophical question which many historians have attempted to answer. Why do civilisations fall after reaching a peak—why is perpetual progress not maintained? The gifted races of Greece, Rome, Egypt, Persia, China, India, Angkor have all sooner or later slipped down the inclined plane. Those like the Hindus and the Chinese have marked time after a certain decline have done so with little value or advantage.

The judgment of rise or decline as applied to a civilisation implies that a certain people or nation have achieved a position of advantage or have lost it. The possession of this advantage is largely a question of judgment of value. These

values are usually material values of political conquest, of intellectual, and social attainments, of economic control. If these values are agreed upon the question whether a certain people are rising or declining is a simple one, and can be easily determined. The decline of historical activity among a people is the result of alterations in one or both of the co-efficients of historical change. (a) The material limiting conditions may alter and become unfavourable, by a change in climatic conditions, by exhaustion of soil or water resources, by the exhaustion of potential wealth such as forests and mineral resources, by adverse political conditions internal as well as external, by an unco-operative economic policy of neighbours, and so on. (b) A decline in historic activity is also accompanied by, if not is the result of changes in the pattern of life. However, those historians and geo-politicians, who glibly talk about rise and decline of peoples, should address themselves as to whether they will class nations like Sweden, and Switzerland, as advancing or declining. They should then consider the reasons for their judgments.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TOWARDS A NEW THEORY OF HISTORY

The theories of History, and the practice of historians that have been reviewed in the earlier chapters indicate that there was a common assumption underlying them all. All of them aimed at acquiring knowledge of events and occurrences as they really happened. All of them were epistemological enquiries. They belong to three categories, viz., (a) The use of scientific method of forming system of conceptions, in so far as it was applicable to the peculiarities of the "data of History", (b) Judicious monographic sorting out of all available sources of information regarding known or knowable events, and determining their authenticity. (c) Writing a descriptive chronological account of a series of actions and occasions. It has already been shown that none of them satisfy the rigour of epistemological exactitude. The first, i.e., (a) is not open to historical phenomenon, the second (b) is indecisive and uncertain, and (c) is a good story told well and reasonably accurate, if necessary, but has no comparison with the certainty attainable or desirable in exact knowledge.

But is it necessary to believe that History

is an essentially and occurrentially an exact account of human life in all its aspects? Is it not all that, and something more? (History is not only "Truth". It transcends the intellectualistic bounds of "Truth" without doing violence to it. It is not a purely cinematographic "Story of Man", with all its sorrows, struggles, triumphs, disappointments, hopes, limitations, greed, meanness, and cruelty, in fact all the passions noble as well as ignoble. This kind of History gives us a two dimensional blotch on a chthonological existential plain. History is on the other hand, a study of change—change with its nature, direction, and purpose that it intends to grasp. This change has several directional evolutions, which take place severally or in combinations. They are more in the nature of sproutings of new values than beams of light from various different angles. If there is no change in this sense then there is no history. That is why in the early life-story of Man, we have considerable number of chronological and occurrential patterns without these patterns becoming historical.)

This historical change is indicated and marked by events and occurrences. These events are particular, non-recurring entities of an individual character. Events are particular and unique, and as soon as they are systematised by the conceptual scientific method of abstraction, they lose their originality and therefore their historical value. For example, when I attempt to know myself, as a 'self', the knowledge I have of myself is wider and more intimate, and therefore more true

than what I have if I think of myself as a member of a species. Similarly historical events have to be grasped and comprehended in all their individual richness and dynamic content.

Scientific abstraction is only one method of comprehending phenomenon, but it is unsuited to a proper comprehension of events and change. Another means of intimate comprehension is the method in Art, which comprehends individuality, and holds it in contradistinction to the universality of the type, a method employed in science. The uniqueness, and "one and onlyness" of historical events is comparable to the creations of visual Art.

Of course, it is not all that calls itself Art that we have in mind here. It is necessary not to confuse Art with pseudo-Art, because the latter is only a hybridised and standardised reproduction of Life's activity. Pseudo-Art is a cancerous growth designed to appeal to the senses and the passions. In pure Art an image of life, and the particular Idea which infuses that image with meaning are embodied together in one indivisible piece of creation. This conception of pure Art differs from that of the Greeks. They sought the pursuit of Beauty with the natural skill and devotion of a handicraftsman, and a naturalist's passion for perfection. They confused physical perfection with Beauty. As a result of this basically narrowed idea of Beauty they succeeded in producing perfectly proportioned individuals, instead of the gods that they sought to represent. In fact the Greeks reproduced but did not represent.

Similarly, pure Art must not be mistaken for Indian 'Ideational Productions', in which Idea and Thought are so overwhelmingly dominant that they do violence to natural laws, and the physical properties of the embodied Form. In practically all Buddhistic and Hindu works of Art we find the same characteristics as are found in some of Epstein's work. Matter takes an altogether subordinate part to the Thought-Theme. The Thought-Theme is shown to struggle for self-expression in a medium which is obviously, and intentionally incapable of becoming an adequate vessel for receiving, moulding, and expressing its vigour, originality, and purity.

Pure Art is one in which a physical image is impregnated with an Idea, neither dominating the other, but each of them surrendering their own essence to the other. In this manner a perfect union of Thought-Matter is created. A pure piece of Art is therefore a physical-idea. In it Matter true to itself expresses an indivisible Idea in all its singleness and originality. Of this conception of Art, Perfect God and Perfect Man, expressed in one Form, would be its highest expression.

An attempt can be made to approach our problem of understanding History, through Art which is a means of representation and creation, and not of puerile reproduction. Historical events are dynamic concrete substances, and not conceptual abstractions. They can be comprehended through Art and not through science. These events are History's irreducible minimum. Change by means of these

events is the capacity of Life to form fresher and newer convergences of directional evolutions. The physical conditions of occurrences are 'Matter' and, the valuational directions are the 'Form.' In this way each event is a unique, original co-efficient, and is very similar to the physical-idea of Art.

This conception of Art, therefore, is eminently suited to bring forth with forceful and dynamic clarity the uniqueness of historical individual events. This Art takes a cross-section of life,—i.e., living Matter-Form and immobilises it by embodying it in representation. It does not represent life in *vacuo* nor as dead inert matter. It takes life in its thoughtful activity, and fixes it by focussed immobilisation. Event is purposeful activity in the present moment of actualising achievement. But nevertheless in spite of its activational mobility, the historical event can be represented, in the same manner as the Thought-object of Art, because as soon as action is accomplished, and the historical event is actualised, the event slips from the present into the 'past.' It, therefore, becomes an object which has stratified, and as such can be known by representation. In this way Art, which can immobilise life's active moment by freezing it as representation, is the appropriate medium through which historical events can be made more intimate, and alive to us.

Art, however, has to use a medium. Sculpture uses plastic and fashionable matter. Painting uses colour. The medium by which historical events can be represented is the medium of language. It

is a rich and wide medium for supplying imagery, expression, and form. Therefore, the originality and obtuseness which are the peculiar characteristics of events, can emerge in all their singularity through linguistic forms. The chief difficulty in the use of linguistic forms is the great problem of reconciling the particular and the universal. Can the particular be created or fashioned out of symbols, which are universal in character? Are words, symbols of universals, and if they are can they by intelligible combination create a particular out of the universal which they signify? The use of the linguistic medium neither disperses nor avoids the great problem of reconciling the particular and the universal.

However, two points relevant in the general Philosophy of Words are sufficient to show that linguistic forms are adequate to represent the historicity, the freshness, and singularity of events. (a) Universals are formed by classificatory thinking. A number of objects are compared, and a single common quality is derived as an abstract universal concept. But names or word-symbols are not a result of such classificatory thinking. They are formed by a sudden apprehension of a single quality that is immediately observed. The mind does not discover the name of a quality after deriving it by abstraction from a number of objects, which observation showed had that quality in common. For example, a tree is named a tree not as result of observation of the quality of 'treeness' among a number of objects, but was so named on a sudden explosive consciousness of the quality of 'Tree-ness'

in a tree. The word tree thus arose out of a particular, and not through a universal or out of an abstract concept. The universal does not precede the growth of linguistic forms but emerges after them as a consequence of "classificatory thinking."

Classification presupposes a language. (b) The linguistic forms used invariably produce in the mind of the recipient a concrete individual picture. Even linguistic forms and symbols manifestly standing for abstract concepts always conjure up in the thoughts of the reader or the hearer, the picture i.e., an image of a particular exemplifying or representing that universal. It is a concomitant of the anthropomorphic bent of our mind. For example, when one thinks of the abstract concept 'Man,' in trying to conjure up before our mind, what one really understands by the concept—an exercise of the imagination one always wishes to indulge in—one always thinks of some individual man, one has seen before. It is impossible to imagine an abstract man whom one has never seen or known. Therefore, the use of linguistic universalistic forms is both feasible and appropriate in creating and representing historical individuality.

It must, however, be remembered that if the method of Art were all that was necessary in order to comprehend the concrete fulness and originality of historical events, then the study of History would not go beyond Art, because History is more than Art. Unlike Art, which has a limit set by its own limitations, History is wider in scope. Art is a representation, and so long as it vitalises and com-

pletely symbolises a particular 'Physical-idea,' it justifies itself. The justification of Art lies within itself, and it obeys its own laws set for itself by its Thought-theme. But with History it is different: History is critical thought taking account of life's activity as manifested in the event. Like Art it represents its subject in all its emergent novelty, but unlike Art it tries to probe at the same time into the conditions that made its emergence possible. The historian tries to go beyond and behind the historical event, and attempts critically to discover the pattern of life which lies around it. On the other hand Art is interested only in the physical-idea, and is totally unconcerned with the world in as much as it lies outside its subject. The physical-idea in Art is withdrawn from life; it has no further concern with life. But with history it is otherwise. History is not and cannot be withdrawn from life, because it is life's entire activity as seen in the event that it studies.... In historical comprehension, the event is critically studied and reflected upon. Once an event has taken place a changed situation has arisen. The next event that arises out of the new situation has the earlier event as one of its antecedent conditions, not separately by itself but as a part of the total ever-fermenting situation. The new event, i.e., event No. 2 arises out of a conditioning antecedent situation in which event No. 1 has been absorbed.

Though events do form the atomic irreducible minimum of History, they do not circumscribe historical reflection. Historical reflection goes even

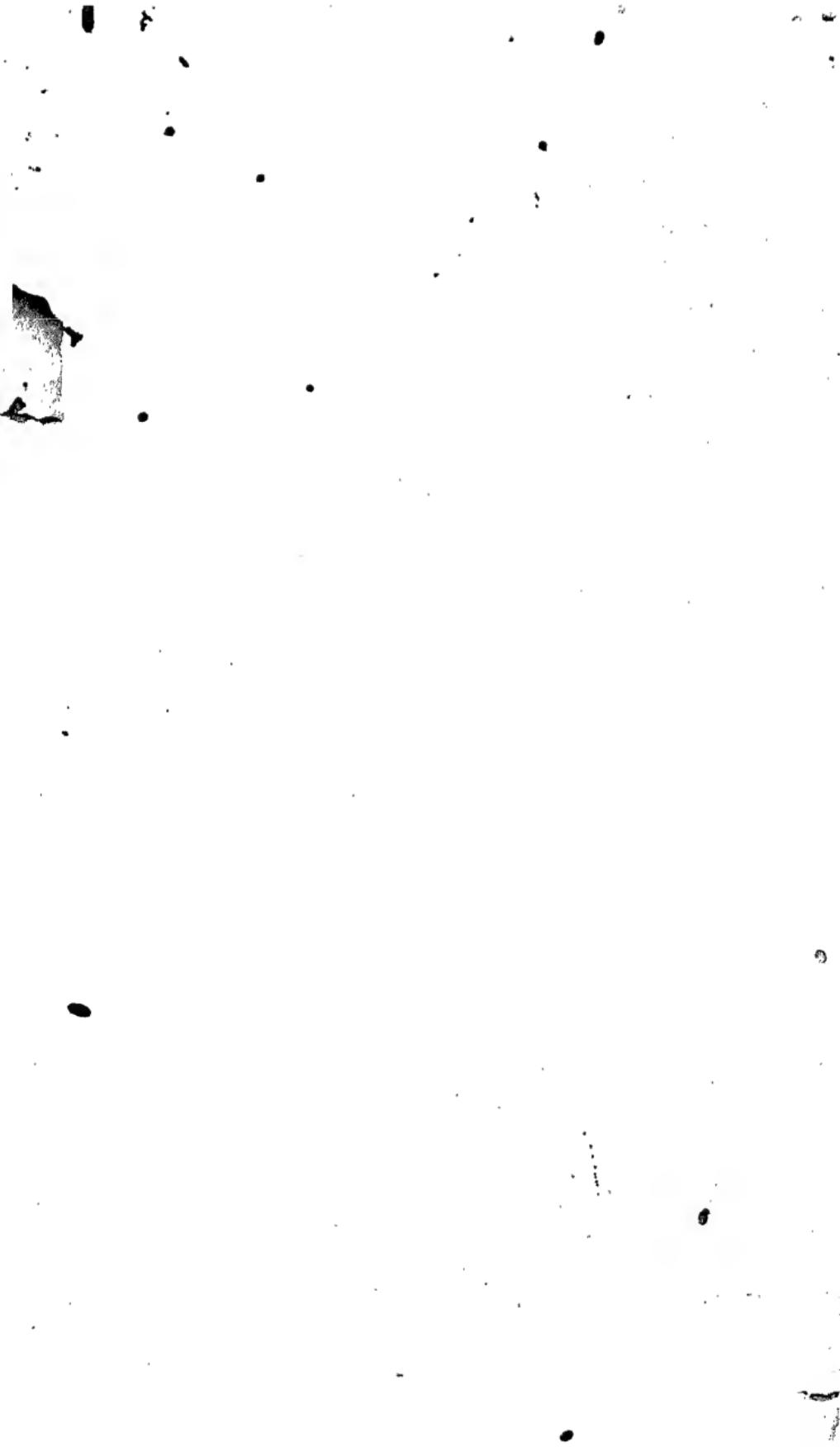
further than events, because events occur in life but are not Living. The word Life is too anthropomorphic but it is much clearer than Living. Events are, however, important pointers, knots of evolutions, valuational diversions, and directional experiments in 'Life.' All events are interesting to History. Their freshness, uniqueness, and originality is an indication of 'Life's' boundless, chaotic possibilities, and accomplishments. The historian, therefore, represents events and understands their significance. He compares them without necessarily analysing or synthesising them. In this way he brings out Life's manifold manifestations. That is why some of the best books on 'History' are written by biologists who are quicker to apprehend events, which occur with such boundless abundance in their field of inquiry. The critical thought which takes hold of all these manifestations is historical reflection. Many a historian has mixed up this boundless freshness of 'Life', with Change. By a striking display of anthropomorphism they have declared slow continuous change in a given progressive direction as a discovery of 'History.' As a matter of fact it is the other way round. Change is only a comparison between two different states on the existential plane. Change, therefore, is not an occurrence. It is a judgment—a judgment by the Historian himself. There is no such thing as a purposeful steady continuous change in 'Life.' There is the boundless buoyancy of 'Life.' The refusal of 'Life' to go along certain well-defined lines. Life is

anarchic—chaotic.

History is a reflection on 'Life', and it uses the method of Art to embody this reflection. Because of this function of 'History', History replaces religion, not Institutional Religion nor religion understood as an article of Faith—Religion in the sense of Man's effort to understand his environment. It is, therefore, not surprising that some of the most gifted peoples of the world have accepted Ancestor-worship, showing their early appreciation of correlation between Religion and History? History thus by its judgment of events restores to 'Man' his sense of wonder in the face of 'Life' and his faith in it.

In this way is resolved the confusion between History and Historiography. Historiography is the artistic expression of History. Historiography is not an Art. It is merely artistic. History is critical thought, taking account of 'Life'. It is a religion in the sense of an expression of our Humanity, and of an awareness of what has happened to us.





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